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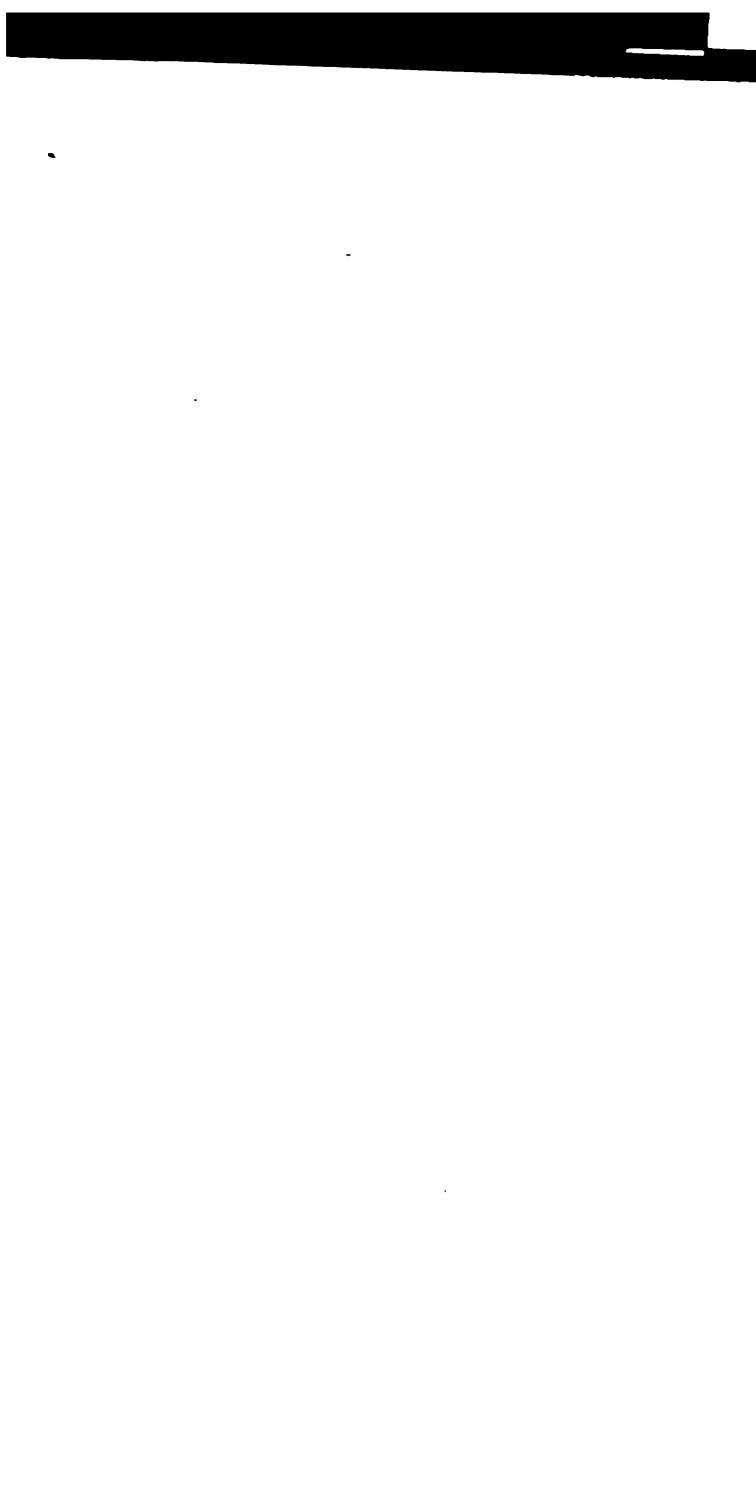
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THE M.P.'S WIFE,

ETC.



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THE M.P.'S WIFE:

AND

THE LADY GERALDINE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE M.P.'s WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THEY sat together; those young matrons, the two fair rivals of other days; and the searching eyes of Lady Elfindale scanned with attentive glance the beautiful face of Mrs. Templar, as the uncertain light of a winter's fire flashed upon it.

Mrs. Templar had fixed her eyes on a picture immediately opposite to her, and saw not her cousin's scrutiny; even if she had, she was not one to heed it.

VOL. I.

"Frances!" said Lady Elfindale, "how strange it seems to look back five years, and see how differently we were then placed with regard to each other. You, an orphan heiress, panting for rank, and fame, and station, through the medium of your husband;—I, a younger daughter, thinking a Clergyman and £700 ayear, the height of my ambition."

"Say rather, the height of your deserts," said Mrs. Templar, turning her bright clear eyes on the insipid countenance of the young Viscountess, with a smile.

"Well, it may have been so," replied Lady Elfindale carelessly; "and yet here we are, now, two wives of three years' standing.

"You, with a coronet," said the haughty voice of Frances Templar; "and I, Blanche, with heaven's best blessing!"

"A Member of Parliament?" said Lady Elfindale, with a half smile.

"A good Husband!" replied Frances.

There was another long pause, during which the Viscountess was biting her rosy lips. These two young wives had never in their lives agreed. Frances, the heiress, had been found by her family constantly in their way; and after her marriage, when her sweet open temper forgave each obstacle they had placed in the way of her happiness, the war still raged against her, but in secret.

Of all her cousins, no one tormented the energetic fiery girl more than the one whose marriage immediately succeeded her own; Blanche, Lady Elfindale. There is but one expression, descriptive of this character;—she was a "sunken rock," glorying in having gained a coronet, at

the expense of a careless husband, because it raised her above the rank of the wife of the tender, good, and upright Adrian Templar, of Mordenbury.

"Frances," said the Viscountess, recovering from Mrs. Templar's last rebuke; "how is your husband?—what a time it is since I saw him last!—what does he do with himself?"

"He has duties in the House," said Mrs. Templar.

"Well, that's a comfort for you," replied her cousin, "for of all the annoyances, a husband always at home must be the greatest."

"I cannot speak from experience," said Mrs. Templar, colouring; "but I certainly cannot blame my husband's absence, when his Parliamentary duties detain him."

"But Mr. Templar never speaks, my dear, does he? and yet—but I suppose he remains in

the House for amusement.—Oh, Frances, Elfindale torments me so, spouting his speeches!"

"Your brother-in-law, Charles Elfindale, speaks more than your husband, I think," said Frances, looking like an empress: "at least he speaks generally, I observe, more to the purpose."

We are well matched, thought Blanche, in this war of words. "Well, Frances," she continued aloud, "there's a debate to night, so our husbands will leave us to our own devices I suspect. Shall I spend the evening with you?"

- "Of course, if you please," said Frances.
- "Be candid, 'cusina mia,' had you not rather I went."
- "I never stoop to prevaricate," replied Mrs.
 Templar; "I had rather be alone, for I have
 letters to write."

"Addio, then.—Ah! a knock!—you expect visitors then?"

Calm, stately, and statue-like, the beautiful young wife stood silent, for she scorned the insinuation, but a curl was on her lip, and a flush on her clear cheek. A step ascended the stairs, and the curl of scorn faded from the lip, and the flush deepened. Lady Elfindale looked at her cousin, whose eyes were fixed on the door,—it opened, and a tall fine looking man, with a broad pale brow, and a mild calm face, entered.

"Adrian!" cried Frances, and she sprang forward to clasp his offered hand.

It was Mr. Templar.

- "You good husband!" said Lady Elfindale, twisting her boa round her throat; "I thought you Members were busy to-night."
- "I paired off with Fellowes. Frances, my love, you must make tea for me to-night,—Blanche will join us."

"Not for worlds! enjoy your 'tête-à-tête' for once. Goodnight."

Mr. Templar handed the Viscountess to her carriage. She uttered no thanks, but her voice was strange when she commanded, "Home!"

No sooner did the equipage leave Hamilton Place, than she was buried in one corner of it, bathed in tears.

"What a home have I to hers!"----

"I'm glad she's gone," said Mrs. Templar to her husband, as soon as Lady Elfindale had left the room, "now I have you all to myself, Adrian.

They were happy, that Member and his brilliant wife.

- "Frances, I'm going to speak to-morrow."
- "My dearest husband!"

- "I'm to answer Charles Elfindale! I suspect, though, he will get the best of it."
- "Oh, not if you exert yourself Adrian,—do not suffer it: rouse your dormant faculties, and show them of what you can be capable."
- "I was never meant for an orator. My tea is very strong my love."
- "But surely a person may become anything they please?"
- "And my little wife would have me electrifying the House?"
- "Ah! Adrian, the happiest moment in my life, and that is saying a great deal, will be that in which I see you—"
 - "What!"
 - "Appreciated."
- "Well done, ambition;" laughed Mr. Templar: and their quiet evening passed in perfect happiness.

Mrs. Templar and her husband were in every respect admirably matched,—that is to say, they were complete contrasts. She was all ardent life, and untamed spirit, and energy. He, calm, mild, and gentle. She was haughty and commanding, both in temper and manner. He, on the contrary, infinitely preferred the peace of acquiescence, to the trouble of argument. She was twenty, and he forty. She was loveliness itself. He was still eminently prepossessing, but retained no advantages of person, (if he ever possessed any,) excepting a fine nose, and a set of bright even teeth.

And this was the man, who, after three years of deep devotion, had won the boundless love, and high heart, of Frances Kindersley.

"Frances," said her cousin Blanche, one day before the wedding, "there goes Mr. Templar."



10 THE M.P.'s WIFE.

- "Mr. Templar is down at his seat this week," .
 said Frances.
 - "Well, it was just like him then-"
- "Impossible!" retorted the 'Fiancée,' "there never was a man like Mr. Templar."

CHAPTER II.

A knot of gentlemen, young and old, were criticising the beauties in Mrs. Kindersley's rooms, the following evening, when there was a stir at the door.

- "By Heaven, what a woman!—who is she?" said one young man, whose ignorance pronounced him a novice; "what eyes!"
- "Do you know," said Mr. Leslie, "I met her the other night at the Elfindales', and her entrance made just the sensation it has done here; it must be her height, for as to beauty—"

- "There can be no difference of opinion on that head," said the Honourable Grey Staines; "for that face is unequalled."
 - "Who is she, Staines?"
 - "Templar's wife."

Frances stood leaning on the arm of her husband's nephew, Herbert Templar; and a very slight bend in her stately figure showed, that were the proud form erect, she would have towered above the five feet ten of her nephew. Her small head was bound by a silver chain, which shone on the glossy braids of the darkest, deepest, brown hair, which was drawn off her smooth forehead in two full bands; her skin was a pure clear complexion, but certainly belonging to the brunette, whilst the fresh pink cheek and full red lip made it still more brilliant in its richness. It would have been difficult to

tell the exact colour of Mrs. Templar's eyes; they danced in their dark light, and flashed till their restless glances rested on no object long together; but the general opinion was that they were hazel.

She was laughing and talking, but still it was instantly obvious that a restraint was in the manner of those around her; whilst the mirth and the nonsense, that is, flirtation of the room, were round the hostess's titled and pretty daughter, the Lady Elfindale.

Frances had been abroad so much during the three years of her married life, that she had seen little in that time of her aunt Kindersley and her daughters; but there was one amongst them who had been her favourite and friend, and she missed her from the crowded circle that night.

THE M.P.'S WIFE.

- " My dear Aunt, where is Adelaide?"
- "Oh, Adelaide never joins these parties; she does not dance."
 - "But is she not in the room?"
- "Oh, yes, I believe she is," said Mrs. Kindersley carelessly; "in some corner I dare say."

Adelaide Kindersley had never been the favourite at home. She was the neglected one of five daughters; but her bounding spirit had used to rise above it all.

Frances looked round the room. In a corner, as her mother had said, sat Adelaide—not the bright glad creature who had been Mrs. Templar's bridesmaid, but a thin, pale, worn girl—sad and silent.

"Frances, how delightful to see you once more! How long have you been in Town?"

- "Dear Addy, you have been ill surely since last year?"
- "Oh, no, I have not; have you been at home long? Are you still in Hamilton-place?"
- "Yes; I am astonished Blanche did not tell you: she was with me yesterday evening."
- "Oh, Lady Elfindale is too grand for us. How is Mr. Templar?"
- "Quite well; he will be here the moment the House is up."
- "There is no doubt of that," said Miss Kindersley, with a faint smile; "as true as ever."
- "More so," exclaimed Frances; and at that moment her husband and young Elfindale entered.
 - "How late you are," said Mrs. Kindersley.
- "We've only just got away," said Charles Elfindale, in a gay free voice.

THE M.P.'S WIFE.

- "The House is this moment up," said Adrian Templar, and he looked pale and fatigued.
- "How fared the speech, husband mine?" whispered Frances, passing close to her husband.
 - "Beaten-fairly done for."
 - "You have beaten him, Adrian?"
 - " No; I knocked under."

Frances passed on, and the brightness was gone from her brow, and the smile from her lip. She glided through a knot of middle-aged men, and heard one say:

- "We've lost the whole by only four!—had Templar roused himself, he might have saved us. There was nothing in Elfindale's speech but strong satire, and it turned the scale; 'pon my soul, I told Templar—"
- "Will you call my carriage?" said Frances faintly to Herbert Templar, "I am so wearied;"

and she turned to look for Adelaide Kindersley.

She was gone; she had left the room.

Frances was stopped near the door by the entrance of another party of young men, and the group so completely barred the way, that she was obliged to hear a triumphant speech from Mr. Elfindale as Sir Mortimer Fellowes passed him.

- "Well, Fellowes, you are alive, my good fellow, after it all !"
- "Alive and well," laughed the handsome Sir Mortimer gaily; "alive to whisper to you, my friend, that Templar's speech was worth ten of yours."
 - "Who won?" asked the victor.
- "You, by a glorious majority certainly—by four!"
 - " But I split Templar's speech to atoms."

"Preserve the shreds, Mr. Elfindale," said Mrs. Templar, turning her flashing eyes full on the speaker as she left the rooms; and I will ask my husband to allow you the use of them."

Charles Elfindale was notorious for raising the ghosts of departed speeches in the House, and making his own striking and brilliant speeches on the foundations of them. Many an old member had often detected some bright idea of his own falling from the energetic lips of Elfindale with treble strength and power; therefore was it, that the retort of the indignant and spirited wife of the member came home to his very soul, and a pause followed her departure.

Frances had no opportunity that night of broaching her darling subject to her husband; but the next morning, the papers came in as they sat at breakfast.—She tore them open,—

she devoured with eager gaze, Mr. Templar's speech; and felt each word of it. One simple "Hear," followed one single paragraph only, and that was the concluding one:—

"Devoted to the last drop of my heart's blood, to my King and my Country, no earthly power shall shake my allegiance,—no earthly numbers persuade me out of those principles, the possession of which, placed me in the honorable situation I fill, of a Member of this House [hear]."

Mrs. Templar saw in an instant the error of these few lines,—she saw the road in them opened to the withering satire of Charles Elfindale. He spoke next,—he launched forth with brilliant ridicule—

* "The question before us is essentially military. I am young in the army,

and perhaps I am persumptuous in thus monopolizing the attention of the House [cheers]; yet, infant as I am, in comparison to the Honorable Member who spoke last [laughter], I cannot acknowledge to the merit of being 'devoted to the last drop of my heart's blood' [laughter]; but would, on the contrary, shed even that cherished drop, of which the Honorable Member speaks so emphatically,—nay, I would shed the whole, in the cause now before us, and under the consideration of the House! [loud cheers, hear, hear! and laughter]. Allow me one more word,—I affirm, in all due deference to a senior, though retired officer, that the speech of the Honorable Member, effective—brilliant—energetic as it was [cheers and laughter], was not to the purpose! [the Honorable Member sat down, amidst continued cheering]."

- "Paltry contemptible wretch!" cried Frances, with a burst of indignation, and crushing the paper in her hands; "Adrian, my dear husband, what did you say?"
- "Oh my love, such things are never noticed in the House."
- "Never noticed!" repeated Frances, her eyes flashing fire, "not when a cowardly stripling—"
 - "Hush, hush! Frances."
- "—Dares to assert, that my husband did not speak to the purpose!"
 - "Perhaps I did not, I was-"
- "But Adrian, was it for him to presume to say so? My dearest, you will answer his insolence?"
- "It is not worth the trouble.—In a few weeks there will be a dissolution."

- " Is it only the trouble you dislike?"
- "That, and a consciousness that he only spoke in the language of the House. He and I came up to your aunt's ball in a cab, together."
- "I cannot think he spoke in the language of the House; surely that does not include language so grossly personal?—When is the second reading of this bill?"
 - " Next Friday."
- "And you object to the trouble only?" cried Frances, her whole face brightening, "then now for my first favour.—Let the trouble be mine Adrian:—I will answer Charles Elfindale; tell me first, why did the House divide?"
- "Because, my love, I and my party were against the bill, and against the reading of it a second time."
 - Mr. Templar then laughed at his energetic

wife; but his gentle ridicule fanned the flame. She was quite determined, at all events, to try and write in secret her husband's speech. Night and day, her mind was at work; and on the second evening, she read to the astonished Member, as spirited a reply, couched in as brilliantly guarded terms, as any accustomed speaker could have framed. Mr. Templar was silent with astonishment,—he gazed on the beautiful creature before him—he saw her flushing with energy, and he rose and paced the room.

- "Will it do, dearest Adrian?"
- "Do!" said the Member, in an agitated voice,
 "Oh Frances, how each day teaches me, that I
 am not worthy of you. You were born for better things than to be the wife of the unknown
 Adrian Templar. Would that you had been
 raised to the sphere, you would so brilliantly
 have adorned."

"Would," cried Frances, sinking into a chair and bursting into tears, "that any lip but yours had framed those words; and the speaker should have dearly rued the moment,—but from you! oh Adrian, you could not mean it."

CHAPTER III.

On the evening of the reading of the bill which was to bring forward Mr. Templar as a speaker, Frances made Adelaide Kindersley dine with her, 'tète-à-tête.'

"I can think but of one thing to-night," said Frances after dinner, as they drew their chairs to the fire—"It is the debate."

"What an interest you take in politics," answered Miss Kindersley, smiling; "how strange it seems, after your total carelessness about them, at one time"

VOL. I.

"That was before I married.—Now I am dying to make Mr. Templar distinguish himself. He has first-rate abilities, but alas! he will not use them."

"But Frances, how much better it is, to have so much of your husband's company, and see him so well and happy, than to have a husband whom you never see, except after he is worn out with fatigue, and dull and miserable-looking."

"To-night, Adelaide, will bring him before the public, certainly!" said Mrs. Templar, pursuing her own train of thought, "and then, that man will find his equal."

- "What man?"
- Adrian's opponent."
- "Who is he?"
- An Elfindale !" exclaimed Frances; "but

his pride will fall:—Mr. | Templar's, speech will trample him to the ground !" 11/ 11/11

- "Is it Charles Elfindelg whom, you wish to be crushed?" said Adelaide quietly.
- "Oh Frances! that is his misfortune."
- "I think not,—I would not, willingly, wrong any being; but at all events, he is the man who dared to turn my husband into ridicule."
 - "Poor man!" said Adelaider sulpus oil
- "To whom do you apply that?" said Frances, drawing herself up like a queen,
- "Not to your husband, but to that unfortunate, Charles Elfindale!"
- "Is he unfortunate?" said Mrs. Templar, changing her tone.
 - "Yes, he is a disinherited son !-he is poor,

and struggling through life in hopes of rising to some situation that will enable him to extricate himself from his difficulties. He has just been refused by the parents of the only person his warm heart ever loved; and now," said Adelaide, her voice trembling, "he is aiming at the same wreath of fame, which Mr. Templar will this night wrest from him. He will lose his darling cause, and your husband will have unintentionally marred his only prospect of advancement."

Frances listened in silence,—she was touched.

Adelaide knew not how far her cousin was implicated in the conquest which both regarded with such different feelings. Frances had kept the secret of the speech to herself.

"Why was he disinherited?" said Mrs.

Templar.

- "I cannot tell: I fear for being expelled from Eton."
 - "Then he is a 'mauvais sujet'?"
 - "Indeed, no !"
 - "And who was the lady in the case?"
- "Myself;" said-Adelaide, abruptly. Frances fixed her eye upon her cousin's face—there was no deeper flush—there was no emotion,—there was the calm resigned look of wan illness—the hollow eyes—the sunken cheek.
 - "And this has made you ill!"
 - r I am not ill, Frances."
- "I tell you what, my dear girl; I shall take you to Mordenbury with me, and bring back your good looks; and then we must have Charles Elfindale at your feet again."
 - Néver; he is too proud."
 - "You care for him, though."

"I am the last person that would confess that I hope!" said Miss Kindersley, now colouring crimson.

"That is right, Adelaide!" exclaimed Mrs.
Templar; "but tell me why your father
refused him? tell me the sole reason?"

"He was poor!" said Adelaide, and a large bright tear filled her dark heavy eyes.

Mrs. Templar was silent; she could not comprehend poverty; she had been nursed in luxury, and left an orphan with thousands at her command; she had married one of England's richest commoners—a man who had entered the army to kill time, and left it when a wife adorned his home—a man who had doubled the princely dower he had received with her, and, consequently, Frances had no

idea of powerty but from the beggars who assailed her carriage windows.

From the agitated applause—from the deafening cheers of his party, with the full drops of
excitement standing on his brow, Adrian Templar rushed into the lobby of the House.

"By Jove Templer, I congratulate: you!"
cried Sir Mark Fellowes 1 " well dope, on my
honour!"

"Will you call my cab, Fellowes?"

"By heaven, Templar," exclaimed Grey Staines, "you annihilated that young Elfindale, with a yengeance!"

me go." said Mr. Templar, "let me go."

"Let me go with you, to see Mrs. Templar's

delight;" said Sir Mark, and he jumped into the cab after his friend.

Hardly had they left the house when another member stood on the spot which the victor had just quitted.

He was tall, thin, and pale; the full blue veins were visible through his clear skin; his deep set eyes were sparkling with fiery impatience, and there was a curl of scorn and temper upon the short firm lip.

- "Hallo! Elfindale, my good fellow, where were your wits to-night? by Jove the question's lost by fifty-three!"
- "Templar triumphed over you, Elfindale! why what could you be thinking of?"
- "My dear Elfindale, how could you suffer that nonentity—that empty-headed fellow, who

never spoke a word fit to listen to-to cut you out so to-night?"

Elfindale, we've lost it you see! I'm sure I never could have believed it! no place under government for you now!"

"By Heaven, sir," cried the infuriated Elfindale; "do you think I wanted a place at the expense of a speech? paltry! it's lost, and I am deuced glad of it, for---"

- "You can't be glad, Elfindale, for-"
- "Do you mean I'm a liar, sir ?"
 - "Come, come, Elfindale, don't be hot."
 - "What do you mean, Mr. Sudbury?"
 - "What I said." To see a sure week, the said
- "Then allows me to say you assert a most confounded."
- ... "Elfindale, for heaven's sake hush !" 10. 1940
 - "Sir! Mr. Sudbury, you are a cowardly---"

"Enough!" said Mr. Sudbury, colouring; that word will suit our purpose without any addition. You shall hear from me Elfindale.

Good evening."

Mr. Templar entered his wife's boudoir with Sir Mark Fellowes, who had known Frances from a child. Miss Kindersley was crouched by the fire.

"Viva!" laughed Sir Mark; "we come to you triumphant by fifty-three!"

Frances pressed her husband's hand between both of her's, in silence: for she did not wish to express her joy at the expense of another's feelings.

"I will go; for the carriage has waited some time."

"Stay supper;" said Mr. Templer, beaming

with pride and pleasure. "Stay, Adelaide, for I've much to tell you; and we have a request about Mordenbury."

"Frances has kindly mentioned it; and indeed I must go."

Let her go, if she wishes it, Adrian; said Frances, feeling for her cousin.

"But you don't wish it, in such agreeable company;" said Sir Mark. "I am sure you don't!"

Adelaide, with a faint smile, and she resumed her seat. Several members soon joined the supper party, and Adelaide Kindersley went to home. Frances soon became acquainted with the fraces and its consequences. The blood curdled at her heart—the triumphant current rushed back in one cold flow.

"" Adrian," said she, pale as death, when they were alone, "how is all this?"

"My dearest!" exclaimed Mr. Templar;

"this night has done the work of ages for me!

I am now indeed a public man, I trust!"

"Heaven bless you, Adrian! but what is this disturbance?"

"Nothing—nonsense—only that hot boy's irritability!"

"But it will lead to bloodshed!"

"And does my wife shudder at that?"

"Can you doubt it, Adrian?—oh, I have a woman's heart indeed! I entreat you to interfere, and put a stop to this duel!"

"Oh, my dear Frances!" said Mr. Templar, throwing himself back in his chair; "it is too much trouble to interfere in the quarrels of two men!"

"They must not—shall not meet!" said
Frances, in a determined voice. "Adrian, your
speech caused the dispute—let your words make
it up again."

"My love, the speech was yours,—now, my dear child, I really am knocked up."

Frances rang the bell. "Mr. Templar's cabriolet, instantly."

"Frances!" said Mr. Templar, bending his dark brows on her----

"My dearest husband, forgive me! I must not be called child.—I would be your companion—your friend—if necessary, your adviser! Forgive me for ordering your cab. Late as it is, I am certain you will just drive down to Elfindale's lodgings, and prevent this wicked meeting. Hear me, Adrian! do not say you are fatigued! there is no House to-morrow—a day will restore

you quite as much as an hour to-night.—If you love me, you will do this!"

- "There's an address to the Throne to-
- "And you present it? You never told me this!"
- "I never thought of it--I shall be knighted in all probability."
- "Knighted!" cried Frances, firing up again,
 "never suffer such a degradation, Adrian!
 what! the name of Templar knighted—Good
 Heaven! I should die under it!"
- "Then I must refuse to present the address, my dearest?"
- "Certainly—without a doubt—depute Sir Mark Fellowes; his baronetcy will cover the indignity."
 - "What a girl you are, my bright beautiful

Frances I" sighed Mr. Templar, as he left her.

An hour and he returned again.

" Well, Adrian?"

"I had an infinity of trouble, but it's all right. I carried Sadbury's spology."

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CHAPTER IV.

THERE was a sofa drawn to the window of the eastern wing in Mordenbury, and a young and lovely figure bent over the emaciated being reclining there.

Rifle-shooting was going on upon the lawn, and the dark circled eyes of the invalid watched the sport.

- "Surely, Adelaide, the noise disturbs you."
- "No, I like it—who fired last, Frances?"
- "Adrian—"

- "Who is that? that was well done. I don't see clearly through the jessamine."
- "That shot was Charles Elfindale's. I will have these thick flowers cut away, my dear girl."
- "Oh! not for me, they smell so sweet.—Mr.
 Templar is coming this way."
- "Frances," said Mr. Templar, bending in at the window, "Fellowes says you would not fire a rifle."
 - " Do you wish me to try?"
 - "Not if you are afraid."
- "Afraid!" exclaimed Mrs. Templar, and she sprung upon the lawn.
- "That woman has a lion's heart," said Grey Staines to Charles Elfindale.
- "She'll not do it, it's bravado," was the sneering reply.

"Stand abide, Mr. Elfindale," said Frances imperiously, "you are in my way."

She calmly raised the rifle, and fired.

- "Well done, by Jove," cried Elfindate 11/
- "When my will is to do a thing, heaven and earth should not turn me," said Mrs. Templar; "my present will is, that you drive me to Mordenbury Cliffs this morning, Mr. Elfindale."

The young man bowed, and Frances again took her seat by her cousin. She gazed long in silence on the pale still face.

- "Do you think you are better since you came here, Addy?"

 "I assure you, Frances, I am not ill—I am weak, nothing more, this spring weather will soon cure me. Ah! I was too happy to come here!"
 - "Would you like me to ask your mother; or the girls, or Blanche, down?"

There, was one small apot deepening on Adelaide's cheek.

"I don't think snamma would like to meet

Mr. Elfindale:"

Bearest Adelaide, since his nucle died and left him this independence, surely your parents and you----

"My dear Frances," said Miss Kindersley, "on that subject pray be silent—the fault is not on our side, a much less observant person than yourself could see that."

Mrs. Templar mused in the silence of her own room on the case before her. The proud heart of Elfindale harboured a wrong, a cruel feeling. He was now able to propose again for Adelaide: but although in the house with heralthough opportunities afforded themselves constantly—although she was fading before his

eyes, he hung back—he would not do it!—
"She offered no opposition when her father
refused me—she shall see now that I care not
for her."

Spite of this assertion his eyes often rested by stealth on the eyes of her he once loved. He paused when her low tones fell on his ear—he often watched her slight figure move across the room—yet he said, "She shall see now that I care not for her."

The sun was shining brightly at two o'clock, when the carriages came to the door which were to convey the party astembled at Morden's bury to the cliffs in the neighbourheod.

"My dear Frances, are you going alone with Elfindale in his curricle?" whispered Mr. Templar, as his wife arranged at the glass her pale pink hat, and its cloud of white blonde."

- "Yes," said the member's wife, turning towards him abruptly, "unless you say no."
- " I?—oh I don't mind, only I thought you had better have Adelaide with you."
- "Not to-day. She will be under old Lady Fellowes's care. I shall not return with Mr. Elfindale."
 - " With whom?"
 - " Jealous, 'sposo mio'?"
 - "Who would not be of you?"

Frances blushed as modestly as if the compliment had fallen from a lover's lip—not that any voice but Mr. Templar's could have summoned that bright blush, or made those flashing eyes fall so suddenly.

"I will return with you, Adrian, for I want to speak to you. You can let Sir Mark take my place with Mr. Elfindale."

Frances Templar never in her life called a man by his surname or by his Christians She had no cousins, no brothers; and beyond that circle, the haughty lip could not stoop to the least familiarity.

With scented glove and silver-headed whip, young Elfindale handed his lovely hostest to the nest of cloak and swansdown prepared for her. The party started. The sun was bright in the heavens, but Elfindale bore its rays with more firmness than he did the piercing intensity of the glance which Mrs. Templar fixed combin lafter they had proceeded a mile in allence and tought "Mr. Elfindale, I have made this apportunity; for I have something to say to you?"

"I know all that once passed between my uncle's family and yourself." I am abrupt, but

it is my nature. I cannot condescend to speak
my thoughts except in one direct channel. Now
allow me to ask you whether you pursue your
present line of conduct with a calm conscience?"

"Suffer me to request an explanation of your meaning," said the insidious tones of Elfindale.

"I thought no one could have asked me such a question I—Pray, Mr. Elfindale, is your heart quite so steeled, that you can see your victim dying beneath your eyes, and yet go on in this cold, this torturing manner?" and Jet go on in this edd, this torturing manner?" and Elfindale; "I really cannot answer what I do not understand." and exclaimed Mrs. Templary energetically as a dying of lexclaimed

"Then she told you to speak to me?!! said
Elfindale, startings, one only a starting to the sta

not worthy of her. Give me the reins, till you are a man again!"

"She is not dying! For God's sake, say she is not."

"I am glad you feel," said Frances, "she may be saved yet—how, I need not tell you. Her happiness is nearly wrecked—it is in your power I trust to save her still. Tell me why you thus trifle with a broken spirit?—tell me how, in my house, you dare thus often and openly wound and insult my cousin's harrowed feelings?—You must be aware of my motives for requesting your company at Mordenbury—I—"

"You have said enough, Mrs. Templar," said Elfindale vehemently; "but Adelaide has a cold heart. She cares not for me, or she would not so easily have resigned me."

"And are you so untaught in woman's

show regret for the man her father had

"Those may be your feelings and sentiments,

Mrs. Templar; but you stand alone in the
world for high dignity and sense of right.—
What?—risk another refusal?—never, by heaven!"

Elfindale lashed the horses till they foamed again.

"The man who would not risk every thing for her he loves is unworthy a thought. I have done," said Frances.

"Nay, hear me. If she would accept me, I would willingly plead once more. I love her still deeply and dearly: had I been aware how much you know, Mrs. Templar, much wretchedness might have been spared."

- "I decline saying any more," said Mrs. Templar, with that woman's tact so rarely found.

 "I have roused you to a sense of the position in which you stand. Here we are at the cliffs. I thank you for driving me here—and I return with my husband."
- "Oh, allow me, I entreat you, to drive you home—I have so much to say."
- "Nothing for my ear, Mr. Elfindale. I have said I return with Mr. Templar."
- "If ever," thought Elfindale, "I saw a woman like that in all my life, I'm not Charles Elfindale."

That evening as Mrs. Templar was moving through her lighted rooms, with the stately grace so peculiar to her, a fold of her lace dress caught in the gilt cornice of an ottoman on which Charles Elfindale was lounging. He started up

to disengage it, and bending forwards, whispered, "I am sorry not to see Miss Kindersley here to-night."

"She is not quite well enough to join so many; but she is in that boudeir," said Frances, and passed on.

"Sudbury, a game?—écarté?—chess?" exclaimed Elfindale in a loud voice, and he fixed himself at the chess table. Frances felt an inward shudder. She hated Elfindale at that moment.

Mr. Sudbury was a very peculiar person. He was generally silent; but when he did speak, he usually said something caustic or severe—no one could be more provoking than himself when he chose to raise his dull dark eyes on the person be wished to annoy, and yet good burnour was certainly stamped on his countenance. He was

rich, but miserly—well connected with a good family, but he disliked the society of superiors—he had a little mind.

"Sudbury, I've got into a scrape."

Mr. Sudbury raised his eyes, and showed his two front teeth.

- "That girl Kindersley-shall I propose?"
- " I thought you had done it."
- "So I did—more fool I—I proposed when I could not have supported her—now ——"
 - " Has she money?"
- "What matters that?—Shall I come forward again?"
- "What the deuce do you ask me for?" said Mr. Sudbury sullenly.
- "Because you can judge coolly—you were never in love."
 - " Wasn't I really?"

- "You would never be afraid of being taken in. Shall I propose again?"
- "The man who is accepted because of an increase of fortune, is,—must be taken in!" said the low sullen voice.
- "I won't do it, I'll be hanged first," said Elfindale; and fixing his eyes on the chess board, he continued the game.

CHAPTER V.

"I know what I'll do," thought Elfindale that night, when the house was at rest.—"I will write to her, and tell her to send the answer to town. I shall get it in two days; if favourable, I'll come post haste and throw myself at her feet—dear, dear Adelaide!"

Charles Elfindale congratulated himself on the bright idea—if Miss Kindersley meant to refuse him, she would be spared the pain of seeing him in the same house—if she accepted him, he would be back to Mordenbury in ten days at furthest. His arrangements would all be made by that time.

He wrote his proposal to Adelaide Kindersley. He left Mordenbury. He waited two days in London, and on the morning of the third, the wished-for reply arrived. He was accepted!

In the following week, Charles Elfindale's carriage was posting with all expedition towards Mordenbury, but it was evening when he arrived. He was ushered into the drawing-room in silence, and one figure only sat in the twilight there. He advanced with eager step, but paused,—for fast, bitter, and deep, were the sobs that were bursting from that lonely one.

It was Mrs. Templar!

"Good God! something has happened to affect you thus!" exclaimed Elfindale.

- "Ask my husband," sobbed Frances; "it nearly concerns you!"
- "Then from your lips let me hear it;— I am prepared by your sorrow for the worst!"
- "It is, indeed, a strange thing to see Frances
 Templar unmanned," said the member's wife,
 dashing away her tears; "but I am unused to
 grief—my husband is in that boudoir: oh,
 heaven! it was her room once!"

Another burst of tears prepared Elfindale for the truth. He stalked slowly into the boudoir, and shut the door violently after him. Mr. Templar soon joined his wife.

- "How did he bear it?" asked Frances.
- "Like a man;" replied her husband.
- "Then," exclaimed Mrs. Templar, "so ought I; for, surely, he loved her as well as I!"

 Adelaide Kindersley was dead!

The Templars returned to town, and Francis incited her now-roused husband to fresh exertions. She was one morning reading, with a proud and beating heart, his spirited speeches, when Mr. Sudbury was announced.

- "How do your politics get on, Mrs. Templar?" said he, caustically, after some conversation.
- "Explain yourself, Mr. Sudbury;" replied-Frances, haughtily.
 - "You of course know the news of the day?"
- "I am not aware to what particular news you allude."
- "They are going to make Templar a Baronet."
 - "I am sorry to hear it," said Frances.
- "Sorry to hear of your husband's gaining the reward of his brilliant talents? Why Templar's a rising man, Ma'am."

- "Possibly; no one is more keenly alive to my husband's talents than myself; no soul appreciates them more fally, but if their reward is a Baronetcy, I trust he will decline it."
- "In Heaven's name why?" said Mr. Sudbury, looking at Mrs. Templar with cold astonishment.
- "The talents that are to be rewarded by a title, may aspire to something a little beyond a Baronetcy, Mr. Sudbury."
- "But we shall have him in the Peerage next, to a dead certainty. He has only to change more decidedly his politics."
- "What do you mean?" exclaimed the indignant wife; "my husband change his politics?— Never!"
- "My dear Mrs. Templar, you surely know he is more than half a Whig aircady?"

and the land

"I warn you, Mr. Sudbury, I am very passionate; my husband is myself. Mr. Templar is a Conservative commoner—we will change the subject, if you please."

"Sir Adrian Templar is a Whig," said Mr. Sudbury, with his satanic smile.

Frances rang the bell, and her page instantly entered.

"The door for Mr. Sudbury."

The queenly bow, the haughty smile, admitted no reply. Mr. Sudbury left that house never to enter it again; and though Mr. Templar was nettled when he first heard of it, still Frances looked so lovely when she flung her arms round him, and whispered that it was through her love for him, that to be angry was impossible.

"You are a noble creature, my Frances, but a fiery one."

- "I know it, dearest Adrian, alas!"
- "I see no alas in it," smiled her proud husband, and the subject was dropped.

The Baronetcy was offered—the Baronetcy was declined; a month passed, and an important place under Government was offered him.

- "I can reply to this without your aid now, dearest Frances," said the member with a smile, and he penned an answer expressing his high sense of the honour done him, and willingness to accept the office, were he not required to do violence to his political principles. No answer was returned to this. On his way to the House, Mr. Templar called at the —— Office, and requested an interview with Lord ——. It was granted.
- "Dear me, Mr. Templar, I really beg your pardon, the place you mention was given to

Lord Elfindale yesterday, as I understood you declined it."

This was enough to provoke even the calm member. When he went home that night, Frances was sitting with a bright crimson spot on each cheek, and opposite to her—Blanche, Lady Elfindale.

- "I congratulate Blanche for her husband," said Mr. Templar, in a clear mild voice, offering his hand; "this is a noble post for Elfindale."
- "I am sure, Mr. Templar, you are very kind to say so, since I fear it is at your expense, is it not?" said the Viscountess, with a smile of triumph.
- "Nay," said Mr. Templar, looking at his wife, "surely Frances told you I declined it, since it was only to be obtained at the expense of my Conservatism."

- "I did not tell her," said the noble-minded Frances, in an almost inaudible voice.
- "My dear girl," exclaimed Lady Elfindale, covering her vexation with a laugh, "I wonder what you could be thinking of to let such a thing slip? Why I thought your heart's highest ambition was a title, and this would have led to one?"
- "There are other paths still open which need not be bought," said Frances, biting her lip, to behave properly.
- "Frances has great forbearance, has she not, Mr. Templar?" said the Viscountess.
- "I never knew of how much she was possessed till to-night," replied the member.

Mrs. Templar's large bright eyes gave one glance upward towards him, and then fell again.

A smile was on her lip, but a moisture in that

softened eye; and her guest was spared her anger, since her husband fought her cause.

One evening, as Mrs. Templar was dressing for an evening party, there was a loud shouting in the street of the "Evening Courier." Frances listened; she knew there must be news: the voices came under her window, and the words distinctly rose to her ears of "Great news—ministers resigned!"

To send for a paper was the work of an instant. His Majesty's ministers had resigned—the Whigs were out—the Tories in.

Before Mrs. Templar was quite dressed, a heavy step came up the staircase, and her husband entered her room. The attendant retired, and he threw himself into a chair. Frances was at his feet on an ottoman in an instant. His lips were on her brow. "My own, my very

own, the first step is now gained! How bright the coronet will seem on such a head!"

- "Adrian, is it, can it be!" exclaimed Frances, radiant with delight; "tell me the whole at once."
 - " Ministers are out."
 - "I know that, dearest; what more?"
- "I am the new Secretary of State in the ——
 Office, and by this day week Baron Templar!".

Frances clasped her hands in speechless delight; she gazed on her husband as though some being of another sphere stood before her. Baron Templar! Her dream of happiness was opening in bright visions of the future to her excited imagination.

"Come with me to Lady Ulswater's tonight," said she, when her trembling voice could frame words.

- "I cannot," said the member, closing his eyes, "I am so fagged, so utterly done up; I look too faded to be the escort of the reflection in that glass."
- "But to enter on your arm, Adrian—to hear your name on every tongue—oh, come to see my pride!—my triumph!"
- "I have seen your feelings once to-night in those tell-tale eyes, my dearest: I could not bear to meet a colder glance; and the warmest in the Ulswater rooms will be that compared to yours."
- "Come for me, Adrian, then; let us be seen together once this night: besides," added Frances, "the Elfindales will be there."
 - "Well, I will just come for you."

Not one in the lordly rooms that night eclipsed Mrs. Templar, when she entered them.

She was by far the loveliest present, and her husband's fame had given her all the sparkling animation that matchless face required.

"Take my arm, and come into this crowd;" said Sir Mark Fellowes to Frances, as she stood surrounded. "I want to speak to you, and we shall find solitude here—is Templar in the room?"

"No; I expect him to come for me, though,
—of course you have heard——"

"All: no one feels more happy than does
Mark Fellowes — but, being an old friend,
I want to give you some advice—may I?"

"Go on;" smiled Frances.

"Well; don't let Templar fag himself till we meet in the House again. Ah! I forgot, he will be in the Lords next session; but he's looking ill—indeed he is—he is not so stout as

he was; he wants relaxation, I assure you,—take him abroad, Frances!"

"I will;" said Frances, and her cheek blanched.

"Don't alarm yourself," said Sir Mark, kindly; "only—now this step is gained—"

"Thank you—it shall be done," said Frances.

CHAPTER VI.

LORD and Lady Templar went abroad, and it seemed as if all her happiness came at once; for at Paris she became the mother of a son. Lady Elfindale with her four children were there at the time, and offered to come and sit with Frances whenever she pleased. Lady Templar could not decline; but her cousin's company was anything but agreeable to her, for Blanche generally, quite by accident, came exactly at the hours when Lord Templar was sitting with his wife. This annoyed Frances

considerably; but she concealed it until one day that Lady Elfindale observed that Lord Templar seemed unwell.

- "Did you come abroad for his health, my dear girl?"
 - "Yes;" said Frances.
- "Then your confinement has been unlucky; for he does not appear to me ever to be away from you. You must be quite glad to get me here to vary the monotony!"
- "My husband's company is never monotony; and with my child I cannot see how time should ever be monotonous to me," replied Frances; "but to tell you the truth, Blanche, you invariably come when Lord Templar is at home. If you could come when he is out I should be much happier to see you—forgive me, but I am old-fashioned enough to love his society en tête-à-tête."

Lady Elfindale never came again when her cousin's husband was at home!

Lord Templar did look ill, from fatigue and late hours, and Frances felt wretched when she saw it; and proposed a tour in Germany until they should be obliged to return to England. They went; and in one short month his health returned; he grew stout, and his spirits were as light and as gay as ever. He returned to his duties with renovated energy—warmly encouraged by his wife. When he returned home at night, he found Frances always enchanted to receive him, with smiles and merry words; at breakfast, there still was she, looking her graceful beautiful self, and his baby as a plaything.

- "Does not Adrian look a statesman?" said she one day to Sir Mark Fellowes.
- "He looks in capital health!—I can tell you a secret about him."

- " What?"
- "You're destined to cut out your cousin, Lady Elfindale, yet."
- "How?" exclaimed Frances, her heart fluttering. "You do not mean more titles?"
- "I think Templar should tell you himself; have no rumours reached you?"
 - " None; upon my word."
 - "Are you to be at the opera to-night?"
 - "Yes; certainly: Pasta's Medea."
- "Then goodbye till then;" laughed Sir Mark. "Templar's at the levee to-day, you know, and he dines at the Palace; goodbye, fair lady!"

Frances heard not a note of the Medea; she was listening for her husband's step among the millions passing her box door.

She had chaperoned a young friend that

night, and this debutante was too much engrossed with the opera to notice Frances's abstraction. Grey Staines and Herbert Templar were in the box. Sir Mark Fellowes was talking to Frances round the corner of the next, occasionally, but she could not fix her attention for a moment.

- "The dinners at the Palace are late generally, are they not?" said she to Grey Staines.
- "I don't know; I never dined there. Has your ladyship any particular reason for inquiring?"
- " I am expecting my husband from the banquet."
- "Oh! with all his honours!" said Staines, with a smile. "Permit me to congratulate you, Lady Templar"
 - "Certainly," said Frances, laughing; "but

this game of honours is like chess—those who look on, see more than those who are most interested— I cannot tell why the people congratulate me."

"Surely you saw in the Post of to-day that Lord Templar is to-day to be created?"

"Lady Templar's box!" shouted the box-keeper, and at that instant two or three gentlemen entered. Frances never stayed the ballet; she rose, and offered to go. Amongst the crush she heard her own name frequently, but nothing more. Fevered and excited, she drove home.

"Is my husband come in, Marsham?"

"Yes; my lady—in your ladyship's room."

Frances flew up. Lord Templar was pacing up and down.

"Dearest Frances! have they told you?" said he eagerly.

"No, indeed, not one word! what—what is it! I am half killed with curiosity and congratulations!"

"Thank heaven, then, the delight of telling this well-kept secret is mine! My own loved Frances, guess my new title!"

"Tell me—tell me;" said Lady Templar breathlessly, pressing his hands to her lips.

" Earl of Mordenbury!"

CHAPTER VII.

- "What sort of a girl were you, my own dear Lady Mordenbury?"
- "One you would hardly have liked, very—passionate—very ambitious."
- "Passionate!—well, it may be so. Ambitious!—that passion has been indulged surely to excess."
- "Pardon me, Clementine; the height of my ambition is not nearly gained; you know the Templar motto is 'Aspiro."
 - "To what in truth might you not aspire,

fitted as you are for the highest station," said Lady Clementine Ebrington, gazing at the proud loveliness of the Countess, with a fervour bordering on adoration, "how proud the Earl must be of you."

Frances smiled faintly—the young girl whose eyes were so rivetted on the Countess's face, was one of many daughters, and as perfect a specimen of childish beauty as could be seen. The haughty Duke of Ebrington had never suffered her to leave home until invited by Lady Mordenbury; and then from that instant a sort of adoration for her young chaperon sprung up in Lady Clementine's breast. Frances was fond of her, for it was hardly possible to dislike one so graceful, so beautiful, and so high-born; but Clementine's admiration wearied her. She had never cared for any but her

husband's; and his was silent in general, although so deep. Clementine expressed hers far too openly, too constantly; and Frances, the proud and noble-minded Countess, began to tire of the sudden devotion of her young favourite.

Clementine was leaning her sunny head on Lady Mordenbury's lap, (she was only eighteen—the attitude may be excused) and Frances looked from her to the reflection of her own face in the mirrors. How different they were! There was Clementine Ebrington:—her bright light hair fell in thick curls down her face—her complexion, pure white, with full deep-tinted lips—her eyebrows pale brown, but the large white lids were absolutely weighed down by the curling sweep of her black lashes.

"Clementine," said the Countess, suddenly, "who said you were like me?"

- "Lord Staines."
- "That absurd creature! that coxcomb, Grey Staines, whom I remember ages ago."

Clementine lifted these same fringed lids, and her deep blue eyes swam for an instant, and then fell again. At that moment, those two beauties little resembled each other,—Frances with her flashing eye and burning cheek, the Lady Clementine with her pale, downcast, fragile countenance.

- "Has Lord Staines proposed to you yet,
 my dear Clementine?"
 - "Yes," said the young girl sadly.
 - " Has the Duke accepted him?"
- "Yes," said Clementine, in the same tone, they say he has, but papa has not told me yet."
- "I never knew till this day," mused the Countess, "that you were attached to that man.

I fancy I said something very rude of him just now?"

- "Nothing that I cared for—nothing that could hurt me, fell from your lips."
- "How do you mean, my love?" said Lady Mordenbury, doubtingly.
- "Because I agree with papa and all the world, in firmly believing no words could fall from you that could wound, or hurt, or do ought save good," replied Lady Clementine.

Lady Mordenbury had lost none of her ardour for rank and popularity, since her husband's accession of dignities. She still soared upwards. Her little boy was now seven, a noble creature full of fire like his mother: there were also two other personages of inferior consequence, yet monopolizing a large portion of their mother's love, the gentle

Lady Frances, and the fiery, passionate, and stately Lady Charlotte Templar, twins of six years of age. Frances inherited all her father's mild temper, with additional sweetness and childish softness and amiability. Charlotte was her mother's image, but ungovernably high-spirited and haughty. The young Countess found it a hard task to curb the infant passions, for she dreaded showing a difference between the twin sisters; yet how was it possible to treat with the same inflexible manner the timid, clinging, gentle Frances, and the wild, flashing Charlotte?

"Mamma!" exclaimed Lord Templar, one day, "there is Clementine's brother, Vereham, page to the King; and here am I, the King's godson—nothing at all."

These words sank to the Countess's heart-

again her ambition rose-she applied to the Duke of Ebrington—he introduced her to higher powers still—she left no stone unturned.

"I have no need to mention Lord Mordenbury's name to his Majesty," said the Lord Chamberlain, to his beautiful and attentive listener, "for already it is so well known and appreciated—"

"It is not of my husband I spoke," said the Countess, blushing deeply with pleasure and pride; "it was my son to whom the king so graciously stood sponsor."

"Your son! ah! is he of age?"

"No," smiled Francis; "he is not eight yet; but he is ambitious to be near the person of his king—as page of honour. When I place my confidence in your lordship's hands, I

feel myself secure of my anxious wish and hope."

In a month the office was gained.

"Good heavens!" said Mrs. Kindersley, one morning; "how that man, Frances's husband, is rising! who would have thought it!"

"It's all her doing," murmured the Viscountess Elfindale; "she would think a dukedom too little for his merits!"

CHAPTER VIII.

- "How fatigued you look, dearest Adrian!" said the Countess.
- "I am completely done up. I must send an excuse to the Ebringtons. I'm not fit to move," said her husband, listlessly.
 - "Take some refreshment, my love."
 - "I cannot; I have no appetite, Frances."
- "Let me mix some wine and water, and take it, my dearest Adrian, for heaven's sake!"
- "It is too much trouble to move. Good heaven!" exclaimed the Earl, starting up; "I

never once thought of answering Lord ——'s letter on the dispatches!"

"Not to-night, Adrian! not when your fatigue is so overpowering!"

The Earl seized a candle and walked to the table, at the same time ringing the bell violently as he passed.

- "Brandy;" said he, as the servant entered.
- "Adrian," said Frances, firmly, taking the pen out of his hand; "dictate, and I will write. You are not in a state to write; you are ill."
- "It must be done!" exclaimed Lord Mordenbury, passionately; "do not check the ardour which you yourself planted in my breast. My love, your cheek burns my forehead, which is fevered enough already."

These were the first words of harshness that

had ever passed her husband's lips, and Frances was stunned by them; but she looked at him and was silent. His eyes glittering; his lips trembling; a burning spot on his hollow cheek; and as he raised those bright eager eyes every moment, the bloodshot appearance,—all stilled the reproach of her heart, and she was silent. The brandy stood on the table. The Earl turned, and tossed of one small wine-glass of it. Frances had removed the tumbler out of sight. She saw that her husband was excited, and she dreaded the effect of the strong spirit on one who hardly suffered wine and water to pass his lips.

There she sat before him, enduring agony unspeakable! She thought on the four first years of her marriage, when she, as the Member's wife the happiest of the happy; he, the

gay, careless, lively, and young-looking Member! now, how changed! She, perhaps, but little changed for twelve years' wear; but he, his hair was grey, and little left; his temples sunk, his eyes always bloodshot, his spirits uneven, and his temper often excited—sometimes irritable—and yet how Frances idolized him still!

- "There! done,—thank God!" said the Earl, dashing down his pen; "ring the bell, and let us have the children for an hour, Frances."
- "I fear, my dearest, they are asleep," said the Countess, gently.
- "Asleep!—always asleep when I want them! Why, in the name of heaven, must they go to bed before eight or nine?" said Lord Mordenbury, petulantly.
- "Perhaps Charlotte is not gone yet, as Frances always goes first."

"I don't want Charlotte—she makes far too much noise for me; pray remember in future, my love, I must see my pets before they go to bed."

"It is possible that Frances may not be in bed;" said the Countess, in her sweet mild voice.
"I will see in an instant."

She flew upstairs; little Frances was not in bed. She had been her last that night, for the nurse was brushing and washing the cloud of rich golden hair, which hung round the placid face of the twin. Lady Mordenbury caught her up, threw a large shawl round her, and carried her, regardless of the weight, down to the drawing-room.

The next moment the little girl was nestled in her father's arms, and he was himself once more. A calm spread itself over the agitated spirit of the high-souled Frances. She sat, in silence,—happy, because her husband's equanimity had returned.

- "You look pale, Frances," said the Earl, suddenly attracted by his wife's silence. "Are you ill, my own dearest?" he added anxiously.
- "I?" said Frances, starting; "no—I was only thinking—how I wish we could go to Mordenbury for a month."
- "By all means, certainly; do not delay, Frances, for indeed you have lost some of your colour. I wish I had observed it before; when will you start?"
 - "Whenever you like, Adrian."
- "It matters little to me; you know it would be impossible for me to get away just now."
- "I thought not of myself, it was of you," said Lady Mordenbury, pressing his burning hand; "Adrian, you work too hard."

- "The machinery here is wound up," said the Earl, touching his forehead; "I am now only redeeming the time lost during the first idle years of our marriage."
- "But," persisted the Countess, with a choking in her throat, "I could not leave you, Adrian; we have been married twelve years, and in that time we have never been separated more than two days."
- "Why, Frances, is this like you?" said Lord Mordenbury, smiling.
- "Go out of town without you I cannot," answered Frances; "ask it not—perhaps it is nervousness; and if so, Adrian, surely you will humour me, since it will not at this season materially interfere with any state duties."
- "I see how it is, Frances; I must just obey."
 - " Ask your heart," said the Countess, laugh-

ing, "could you go to Mordenbury, and leave me behind?"

"No," said Lord Mordenbury, with a flash of ancient merriment and archness, "not even if you had state duties—There!—I am even with you, my dear."

THE M.P.'S WIFE.

CHAPTER IX.

The evening before the departure of the family for Mordenbury, Lady Elfindale, who was on her way to Germany, came in to wish Frances good bye, and asked her, as the traitor lips touched her cousin's cheek, if she was contented with her honours, or whether she aspired to any more.

- "I am satisfied with my Countess's coronet," said Frances in reply, with great sweetness; and so is Adrian."
 - "Well, I hope you will permit me to rival

your grandeur soon," laughed the Viscountess, for the old Earl of Herries is dying, and Elfindale is next heir; you know, Frances, it is quite against rules your getting the start of me. I must say I long to be Countess; it is a pretty title."

- "Perhaps," replied Frances, rather nettled,

 it may not suit you so well as the Vice
 Countess—forgive the pun."
- "But never the insult!" exclaimed Lady Elfindale; "good bye, Countess of Morden-bury; may we never meet again."
- "Good bye, Lady of Elfindale," said Frances; and they parted.

That night the Earl was to make a very long speech on the —— Bill, and Frances waited up for him till nearly four, anxious and uncomfortable. She had strongly urged him to speak

that night, and now she feared he would exert himself too much.

Five o'clock struck, and she heard the street door close gently; she looked down the well staircase, and saw his tall, strong, figure slowly coming up, whilst, with his handkerchief to his mouth, he was stifling a cough. He entered her dressing room, and sat down.

"Glorious triumph, Frances—hem—I am almost dead though—breathless—hem—have you anything to stop this tickling in my throat? I spoke for two hours, and Elfindale—hem—put me in such a confounded passion."

Frances was dropping into a wine-glass some syrup of poppies, which the Earl often took; she had her back towards him, but started forward on hearing the unusual exclamation from him of "Good God!—look here, my love."

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He had passed his handkerchief across his lips the moment before, and it left them saturated with a sudden rush of blood. The Countess tore the bell, and flying to his side, placed her arm beneath his head. She was just in time, for the next instant he had fainted.

CHAPTER X.

THE Countess of Mordenbury sat at the open window of the lordly mansion, where, seven years ago, she had sat in the same spot, by the side of her cousin Adelaide. Now, Lady Clementine was there, gazing up in the matron's beautiful face, whilst the bright piercing eyes of Frances were darting after the movements of Lady Charlotte, who was flying to the water's edge after a greyhound; Lord Mordenbury was seated on the lawn, reading letters.

Suddenly a gentle step entered the room, and

a pair of little arms were wound round the Countess's neck.

"Mamma, dear, look what I found in the tapestried room."

Frances looked at the large roll of parchment clasped in Lady Frances's tiny hands. She unrolled it. There in large characters she saw traced—

" The Family Tree

OF

TEMPLAR OF MORDENBURY."

- "How often have I longed for this," exclaimed the Countess; "how did my darling find it?"
- "I was running through the tapestry, and fell over a tin case, Mamma."

Many an anxious look did the proud eyes of

Frances cast over the almost illegible document, and trace her husband's stainless line of ancestry.

- "Mamma," exclaimed little Lady Frances, suddenly, "why is not Papa a Duke?"
- "What makes you ask, my love?" said the Countess, turning towards the child.
- "Because," replied Lady Frances, "I have been peeping under your hand; and look, Mamma, in that leaf I see Aylmer Adrian Templar, Duke of Mordenbury, which title was forfeited to the Crown in 16—; now, why was it forfeited?"
- "It does not say," replied the Countess, and she folded up the tree. She put the treasured parchment by—she forgot it not, for "Aylmer Adrian, Duke of Mordenbury," roused the sleeping spirit in her heart. The next morning

her attention was attracted by the following announcement in the "Post."

"Died—on the 12th instant, William Elfindale Morton, Earl of Herries, in the 70th year of his age. His Lordship is succeeded in his title by his third cousin, Henry, Viscount Elfindale."

"Now she is a Countess," thought Frances;

"and she taunted me with getting the start of
her!—wait, good cousin mine, and I will yet
bind the strawberry leaves on my brow."

Shortly after this, the Countess received a letter from her Aunt Kindersley, containing this paragraph:

"I have just seen Blanche and her husband, who have returned home very suddenly. The Earldon sits well on Elfindale; which is not

astonishing, as of course he always expected it, and when one receives one's due, it fails to create pride or pleasure. Blanche likes her new coronet very much. Elfindale is seventeenth Earl."—

"That means to insinuate Adrian is first Earl," said Frances, folding up the letter, "n'importe! wait only——"

The cherished subject was whispered to the Earl; he knew of the dukedom, but, as he said, "why revive it? the trouble would not be repaid; and you my Frances," he added, "you are above the petty vanity of being called your Grace."

"And yet how appropriate, how becoming the title would sound," said Lady Clementine.

Frances was too proud to answer the compli-

ment, although Clementine had only meant what she said. Frances detested a compliment; from a man she invariably resented one.

Sir Mark Fellowes next gained her confidence.

- "To think, my dear Sir Mark, that this is in our very grasp, and yet my husband hesitates to spring that glorious step,—that almost last height of honour,—because of the trouble."
- "My dearest love!" exclaimed the Earl, impatiently, "you really are a most extraordinary person; these titles are empty things; I am weary of it all now; and believe me, even if I gained the dukedom, you would soar to something higher still—"
 - " Premier, perhaps," laughed Sir Mark.
- "Ah!" said the Countess, "I should be the happiest—no, I will not say I could be happier

than I am—but oh! Adrian, what a glad moment to me, to see you receiving the forfeited rights of Templar."

"Oh! for the happy days when I was plain, quiet, careless, Adrian Templar—oh! Fellowes, for the days when that dear Frances of mine, was the simple Member's wife."

"There, that's so like him!" said Frances, as her husband left the room; "what shall I do, Sir Mark? it is only the trouble he dislikes—shall I canvass? do tell me what you advise?"

"I will," replied Sir Mark; "I advise you to let Templar—I mean Mordenbury, alone—the sword is wearing out the scabbard, my dear friend.—You love your husband?"

"Love him!" burst from Frances's lips. "I am glad old acquaintance shields you for the doubting tone. 'Love him? Good God how fearfully!"

"Then make him take rest," said Sir Mark; and he left her.

Months passed, and the Countess was breathing the atmosphere of rank and royalty, but it would not do.—She was admired—that was nothing unusual. She was a favourite at Court—for that she cared little—a pang was at her beating heart—a worm within her restless breast. Ambition was at work, and the excited mind rested not.

It was after one of the most crowded drawing rooms of the season, that Lady Mordenbury sat at a small table in deep thought. Her plumes were drooping over her jewelled brow. Diamonds flashed on every finger of the fault-less hand on which that small head leant. She was musing over a mysterious sentence, which had that morning passed the royal lips, and she could not solve it.

"We shall not see you again, my dear Countess!" and an emphasis had been on the last word.

"I cannot be out of favour—I have done nothing—besides, the gracious tone,—no, something is in store."

At this moment, the Earl's cab turned the corner of Hamilton-place, and he was in the drawing-room before Frances could disengage herself from her gorgeous train. Lord Mordenbury looked deadly pale, but a laugh was on his lip, and laughter in his dancing eyes.

- "My life!" exclaimed the Countess, springing forward, "there are no ill tidings in that tone! what news?"
- "Great," said the Earl, clasping his arms round her, "forgive me for having been again secretly at work; how could I rest and know

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that one wish of yours was ungratified? read this?"

Frances read:

- "His Majesty has been graciously pleased, in token of approbation, to grant unto Adrian, Earl of Mordenbury, the right and power of reviving the dukedom of Mordenbury, extinct in the noble Earl's family since the year 16—"
 - "Frances, is all gained? whispered the Duke.
- "God bless you!" exclaimed Frances, and sinking back, she burst into a torrent of tears.

CHAPTER XI.

THE Dukedom was gained; but was the Duchess happy?—no!

Frances was only perfectly happy in the society of her husband, and now she hardly ever saw him;—when she did, he was exhausted—unable to notice her, beyond a look of the devotion with which he ever greeted her; and she, she would hang over him, and gaze in the dark dim eyes, and watch them close in restless sleep, till her full heart swelled to bursting, and her bitter tears fell fast and thick on him who was sunk

in that stupor of over-wrought energy which felt them not.

One day Sir Mark Fellowes surprised her in one of those bitter agonies of tears which those of her temper only know.—Sob after sob was bursting from her, and her face was buried in her handkerchief.

- "Frances," said Sir Mark, "why is this?"
 There was no reply but sob—sob.
- "Frances," continued her old and true friend, has anything happened to your husband?"
 - "No, thank Heaven!"
 - "Or your children?"
 - " Nothing."
 - "Then this agitation is without a cause?"
- "Without a cause?" exclaimed the Duchess, uncovering her face, still lovely, though bathed in tears. "Am I one to indulge in sorrow

without a cause?—Oh, Sir Mark, if you but knew, in all my splendour, how utterly and unspeakably wretched is the envied creature before you!"

"Oh, Frances, surely this is weak; you have been ill—you are nervous—you must shake this off, and send for the children."

"No--let me speak to you alone, for only an hour ago I parted with Adrian. Sir Mark!" said the Duchess, clasping his hand, "you have known me from a child—you have been a father to me—you saw me when I married—you saw in every action proof of my unbounded love for him, my husband!—you see it now unabated through all the cares and interruptions of his busy life."

"Frances," said Sir Mark, "be composed!"

"I am-you know all this. You remember

Adrian when he was well and happy as Mr. Templar, the Member, wishing no more honour that he had. You remember my first entreating him to speak in the House? From that hour I have urged him on, till his enthusiasm passed my own: now, oh Heaven! he cannot stop—he is killing himself by inches; and who would ever guess that that wife, who so worships, idolizes, and adores him, was the one to strike the blow—that her voice urged the act—that her hand did it all! Save him, Sir Mark! Save my husband, for I am Frances Templar no longer! I am broken-spirited and broken-hearted now!"

Sir Mark watched, in silent, deep concern, this wild burst of feeling. He felt how truly the Duchess had been speaking—he hardly knew what course to take.

"What first put this idea into your head, Frances? Mordenbury does not look ill?"

"I have proofs that he is so: he will see no medical adviser—he refuses to leave town—he is up night and day; and when I entered his library this morning at daybreak, I saw the ghastly dawn streaming on his blessed face, and he was asleep!—but—in his hand—this hand-kerchief—it was close to his mouth."

Almost gasping, Frances showed the handkerchief—it was spotted and streaked with blood! Sir Mark turned cold.

"That's my doing!" groaned the Duchess.

"Oh fatal love of advancement! fatal ambition!

Had I but let him rest at plain Lord Templar—
had I but suffered him to take that rest his
placid spirit loved—"

There was another burst of sobs.

- "Take my advice," said Sir Mark, in a low husky voice; "write instantly to Dr. L—; there is no time to be lost—make Mordenbury see him."
- "Torture me not!" said the Duchess.

 "Adrian has just left me—commanded to Weymouth, and Heaven knows when he may return?"
- "Would you like me to start for Weymouth, and watch him closely?"
 - "Oh, if you would !--if you would !"
 - "What do they want with him there?"
 - "I know not."
- "I hope to Heaven," said Sir Mark, pacing the room, "that the report of Ministers going to resign is not true!"
 - "If then, what of it?"
- "Because in that case there may be something in the wind—eh?"

- "How?—I am bewildered—what?"
- "Mordenbury is the man they want to fill the place of—"
 - " Who-what?" panted the Duchess.
- "Premier of England," said Sir Mark abruptly. It was strange to see the change in Frances at that moment. The large bright tears seemed frozen to her cheek, which grew the deepest crimson. Her full dark eyes half fell—her proud lip trembled, and her stately figure stood erect, as if chained suddenly to the spot. Sir Mark was pacing the room, with his head bent on his breast.
- "There is such a thing as declining," said he, hesitating, and fixing his eye on the Duchess. She moved not—spoke not.
- "I'll be off to Weymouth in an hour; give me some message. Frances, would you have him, should the post be offered, decline?"

THE M.P.'S WIFE.

Sell she was silent.

- "I am going—one word—suppose he asks me what your feelings are, shall——"
- "In pity leave me—tempt me not," said
 Frances; and burying her face in her hands, she
 flew from the room.

CHAPTER XII.

The second morning after this interview, the Duchess received a letter from Sir Mark. He had met the Duke on the road, returning from Weymouth; he had found him ill, and had insisted on his journeying by easy stages home. Sir Mark gave no particulars; he was evidently either hurried or agitated, for he only said:—

"Your husband is with me now; your Grace may expect us to-morrow."

How the intervening hours sped can only be imagined; what the Duchess felt when she saw the travelling chariot turn the corner of Hamilton Place, slowly, cannot be expressed. Before the doors were opened to receive the Duke, his wife was senseless. It was the first time in her life she had ever fainted.

She awoke to find Sir Mark hanging over her.

- " My husband!" burst from her lips.
- "In your room. Be calm. Frances, you must be prepared!"

The Duchess dashed away the arm that would have kept her back—she was in the next room in an instant—the tall, fine, figure of her husband was stretched upon the sofa—she was on her knees in an instant more, with her arms clasped round his neck.

- " Raise me," said the Duke.
- " Pardon me," said a physician advancing,

"his Grace must not be moved; your Grace is not aware that the Duke has ruptured a vessel on the lungs; a word may be fatal: he must not move."

Frances groaned; her eyes were glazed—her lips perfectly livid.

- "Oh God, one breath!" said the Duke, in a low gasping tone; "one breath of life to tell her."
 - "Adrian! for my sake!" whispered Frances.
- "It is won, my Frances, my beloved wife—the last step."
- "Oh do not speak, Adrian," said the Duchess, in a voice of stifled agony; "I implore you, do not speak."
- "One breath, one instant, oh my God!" exclaimed her husband, raising himself by a violent effort, and struggling for the boon of life for one frail instant; "bless you, my own

Frances, be happy, I am at last—Premier of England!"

He fell back—there was a short fierce struggle; Frances hid her face upon his breast—she heard the wild flutter of his heart—she heard the long last gurgling sigh—she heard that noble heart give one high bound—it stopped.

The physician spoke to her, but she answered not. Sir Mark Fellowes started forward, and looked at Dr. L---.

"It is all over-he is gone!" was the reply.

Sir Mark placed his arm gently round the Duchess, and raised her from the body; she made no resistance, but turned her eyes full upon him.

It was a dreadful look—it told the dreadful tale. Reason had burst her bonds, and the firm aspiring mind of the Duckess of Monden-

bury had given way. She was a melancholy maniac!

- "Is the case hopeless?" said-Sir Mark, one day, as he sat by the unconscious widow, on the afternoon of the funeral; and the large heavy tears stood in his eyes.
- "Hopeless," replied Dr. L.; and the sooner the children are removed the better."

The Duchess of Ebrington offered to take the twins, and she came for them. Lady Charlotte was sobbing in the school-room, and gladly heard she was to be taken away.

- "Take me with you," she exclaimed to the Duchess of Ebrington; "it is so dreadful to see Mamma so! I cannot bear it."
- "Where's the other?" said the Duchess to the Governess.
 - " Always in her Grace's room."

The Duchess of Ebrington entered her friend's room. There, by the fire, sat Frances, in her deep weeds of mourning; at her feet was her little girl: neither mother nor daughter moved when the Duchess entered.

- "My darling," she whispered to the child;

 you are to come home with me: Charlotte is coming."
- "Charlotte may go," replied Lady Frances, pressing her lips on her mother's cheek; "but I will never leave mamma! If you take me away I shall die! I will always be with her, for I am the only one she knows!"
- "Good heaven," said the Duchess, turning to the Governess; "it would be cruel to take this child away. How mournfully like she is to her poor father! she has his voice and manner exactly!"

Lady Frances was allowed to remain with her mother. The unfortunate Duchess rarely opened her lips; and when she did, it was only to breathe in every varied tone her husband's name of "Adrian!" She would sit and stroke the golden hair of the head of little Frances, and occasionally a smile would light those lovely features, but no ray of reason dawned again.

She died! She faded away till her last moment was only perceived by the gentle creature who had watched beside her for two long weary years. Lady Charlotte made her Guardian's house the constant scene of disturbance and annoyance: and all felt, when she married from their house, that the loss of her company was an unspeakable

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relief. Ten years passed, and again the dukedom became extinct; and now, perhaps, there is no heart which still remembers The Members Wife.

THE LADY GERALDINE.

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THE LADY GERALDINE.

CHAPTER I.

"So the Fane-Seytons are coming to England at last!" exclaimed Isabel Seyton, to three gentlemen visitors, one morning. "You know the family, I think, Colonel Huntly?"

- "Slightly."
- "Tell me," cried Fanny Seyton, springing towards the group; "Is this fair cousin of ours, this youngest girl, whom they call in joke 'The Lady Geraldine,' so very lovely?"

"I met Mrs. Fane-Seyton at Naples," said Colonel Huntly; "Miss Geraldine is very pale, very proud, very perverse, and certainly very pretty!"

"It was the fashion to call her so when I met them France;" said Captain Elliston, sneeringly. "I remember she——"

"You remember, my dear fellow," said a lively young man, with bright blue eyes, and a broad fair brow; "that your heart was not quite untouched in a certain gondola one night."

"Geraldine—my niece—sings, I hear;" said Mrs. Herbert Seyton, the mother of the quiet graceful Isabel and pretty Fanny Seyton; both of whom she had just introduced.

"Sings! yes — she sings;" said Captain Elliston.

"And sings well in a gondola!" said Colonel Huntly, glancing at the Captain.

- "And sings also in the ruins of a certain Colosseum;" said the Captain, glancing at the Colonel.
- "I am so anxious to see them," said Isabel;

 "we have not met since our infancy!"
- "It is a pity your cousin's fame has preceded her; you will be disappointed," said Colonel Huntly.
- "But, Mr. Damerel!" exclaimed Isabel, laughingly, to the lively young man; "now for your verdict—you despise fashion I know; but you say you saw her often abroad—what did you think?"
- "I only saw her once, in the chapel of the Embassy, at Rome," answered Damerel; "and then I thought nothing of her; it was the fashion to call her pretty, but for my part——"

"Come, Captain Elliston," said Miss Seyton,

turning to the third gentleman; "you met my aunt in Paris, was Geraldine still the fashion?"

- "She was fascination itself!" was the answer.
- "Damerel, my good fellow," said young Everhard Seyton, the only son, bursting into the room; "do me a favour, will you?"
 - "What is it?"
 - "Run down to Brighton with me."
- "My dear fellow, Brighton is a desert now. How can you think of it!"
- "I must go. Standon has got a hunter there that I must see;—now do go, there's a good fellow—we can run up again to-morrow."
- "What will Mrs. Lane say if you miss her ball," said Fanny Seyton, coming forward; "how ridiculous you are, Everhard! always horse-hunting! and you, too, Mr. Damerel—are you going, too, on another wild-goose chase?"

- "When was the last?" said Damerel, laughing.
- "How can I remember?—but what is the use of missing the first ball of the season. Don't go, Mr. Damerel. Isabel, tell him to stay. Oh, good morning, Colonel Huntly,—is that your beautiful bay down there? What, are you going already, Captain Elliston? well, I suppose we shall see you at Mrs. Lane's.—Goodbye."
- "Now, Fanny, do sit down," said Isabel;

 "you have absolutely talked them away."
- "That is just what I wished; only what bad management of Everhard to take William Damerel away the very day we wanted him."
 - "Who wanted him?"
- "You and I of course. Do you know, Isabel, I begin to dread the Fane-Seytons' coming; for I hear from old Mrs. Pimm there, that they

carry off every bean they come near;—indeed you need not laugh, for it is no joke to have pretty comins breaking up our set."

- "I am not afraid;" said Isabel, smiling.
- " But they say this Geraldine is so lovely."
- "Go to that mirror, Fanny."
- " Nonsense: don't you long to see her?"
- "My dear Fanny, don't shake the table; William Damerel said---"

"That he thought nothing of her. Ah, I heard him; but I don't believe that: he is as deep as any one. Look! just look at him and Everhard in that foolish tandem. Everhard!" exclaimed Fanny from the balcony; "you are not off?"

- "Yes, I am.—Goodbye."
- "And you, Mr. Damerel?"
- "Under orders, Miss Seyton.—Goodbye."

Fanny Seyton was exceedingly pretty, but Isabel was simply elegant. Fanny never cared what she said, and generally said much more than she thought; whilst Isabel, calm, quiet, and gentle, felt more deeply than any one gave her credit for, and never expressed half she thought or felt.

Mrs. Herbert Seyton had been a beauty. Her husband married her on that account. His only brother married an heiress, Miss Fane, and these Fane-Seytons, strange to say, monopolized the beauty of the family, although Mrs. Fane-Seyton was anything but handsome. Certainly, Fanny was almost beautiful; but she had not the high cast of beauty attributed to the talked-of Geraldine, whose arrival was now anxiously expected by many young members of the large family. An elegant house had been

every day were measurements despatched from Park Lane to ask how the family were after the journey, and each day the answer returned was, "Mrs. Fane-Seyton not arrived—expected that evening."

"I shall not send again," said Mrs. Herbert at last; "they must tell me—it is so tiresome expecting people, when one does not know how they are coming, or where they land."

When young Seyton and William Damerel arrived at Brighton, they went to the Albion Hotel, and as soon as the whimsical son and heir had chosen a room to his taste, they sallied forth to the parade, there to amuse themselves until the arrival of any boat or packet at the pier-head should attract them to that then attractive promenade.

These two young men had been friends from childhood. Damerel was six years senior to Seyton, yet their friendship seemed only the firmer from the difference; as the wild and impetuous character of the latter required the control of one so immeasurably superior in calm decision of temper as was William Damerel.

- "I wish we could take a run to Dover," said.
 Seyton, after a silence of some moments.
- "I thought the Brighton fit would not last a day," answered Damerel; "what put Dover into your head?"
- "Because the Fane-Seytons are sure to land there, and I might have seen them first. I'm dying to see this girl Geraldine."
- "You will be disappointed then in her beauty, for she is nothing at all to compare to your own sister Isabel."

"Isabel?—Why, Damerel, you don't think her pretty?"

"I daresay our dinner is ready," said the young man, hastily; "let us turn."

Seyton looked at his friend, and marked the deep flush that had mounted to his forehead;—they were both silent, and walked on. A new light sometimes bursts on a person so suddenly, that it startles them for the time, and they are incapable of collecting the ideas which that ray of knowledge had scattered. So it was with Everhard Seyton: he saw before him William Damerel—the gifted and the good—the courted and admired;—he saw him, though with bright prospects, comparatively poor, and the conviction rose strong in his mind, "It won't do."

There is bitterness in those words, simple as they are! The thought that gave rise to the expression might be easily conjectured—Everhard Seyton was proud of his family—his sister —and, alas! his gold!

- "If you please, sir," said the waiter, as the friends sat at dinner, "the Dieppe steamer's in sight—great many to land to-day, sir."
- "Come along, Damerel," cried Seyton, jumping up; "come and see them."
- "No, no—I'm tired. I'll watch you from this window," said Damerel; and the next moment he was left to his solitary meditations.

CHAPTER II.

As the dirty little steamer from Dieppe neared the pier, its freight of passengers became objects of great interest to those who watched its progress through the froth and foam of the angry sea.

Everhard Seyton secured an excellent place, and leant over the side of the pier to examine a group of people preparing to land from the packet. This group consisted of three young girls, a courier in a sort of fancy dress, a femme de chambre, and three gentlemen, two of whom

were evidently father and son, the third a young Frenchman—he might be an officer—he had an air of the "garde nationale" about him. The whole party were conversing fluently and merrily in French; but after the first moment, Seyton's attention was given but to one, apparently the second of the three young girls. There was nothing in her dress to call forth admiration, nor in her figure, for it was entirely enveloped in a thick boating-cloak—a large straw hat, far from new, was thrown carelessly back from her face,—and it was on that face that the eyes of Everhard rested in one unshrinking gaze. was fair almost to insipidity; but the brilliant colour of her lips, and the dark sweep of her eyelashes, relieved the pale delicate cheek. Her hair hung, in spite of the sea-spray, in large long curls under her bonnet, and no sooner was

she aware of the proximity of an admirer in the form of Seyton, than she raised to his face the full blaze of a pair of eyes, so clear, so bright, so fearless in expression, that he involuntarily recoiled.

- "Is she English?" was his first thought; and then he caught the tones of his language falling from her lips. The party were not aware that every uttered word was heard by those who, like Seyton, were leaning above the vessel, and he heard the elder girl say to his beauty,—
- "Come down stairs—we had better go to mamma in the cabin."
 - " I shall be suffocated there," was the reply.
- "But the people stare so; and there is one person who has done nothing but look at us."
- "I see him," said Seyton's admiration, again glancing at him, "but I don't care. Come, Laura, let us stare him away."

Seyton instantly prepared to retire, as he found his divinity less beautiful on close inspection than he had imagined, when they all rose and mounted the ladder close to him. He then observed a very pretty foot under the boating-cloak,—he followed them away, and saw them disperse into different carriages in waiting for them; and, lastly, he heard the father exclaim,

- "What are we waiting for?—Come, M. d' Avignon, why do you always make a point of being the last?"
- "C'est mademoiselle," laughed the Frenchman, "who has lost her handkerchief."
- "Never mind—we can't wait. Here is your place, M. d'Avignon; Geraldine, get in."

Seyton started—in an instant he guessed the party; and, before he could recover his senses, the last carriage had disappeared. This, then,

he felt convinced, was the beautiful Geraldine Fane-Seyton, his cousin! and, not knowing their hotel, he turned into his own, angry with himself and Damerel too.

- "Who the deuce do you think I've seen?" was his first exclamation, as he tossed his hat across the room.
- "The horse, I suppose," said Damerel.

 "What a time you have been!"
- "I've seen the Seytons—all of them; and, by Jove, if that Geraldine is not as beautiful a creature as——"
- "Stop, my dear fellow—you don't mean they are here in this hotel?"
- "No—but in Brighton. If you had only been with me, I should have known them. 'Pon my soul it's provoking.—I've a great mind to find them out—eh, Damerel? Are you dreaming of Geraldine?"

- "Not I!—I've often told you I don't think her even good-looking."
 - " Shall we go and find where they are?"
- "Oh no-to-morrow will do; look at that clock—we are late—it's past ten."

The next morning Seyton heard the new arrivals were at the Norfolk Hotel, and thither he posted, but too late, for they had all started for town. He then went to look at his horse—found there was a fault in him quite unpardonable—and was in Park Lane at three o'clock, just in time to see his family all starting for a morning concert.

- "You will go with us, Everhard, I hope?" said Isabel.
- "Not I, indeed—I'm off to Hertford Street.

 I shall pay my respects in time; but Damerel will go with you, I daresay."

140 THE LADY GERALDINE.

Seyton went to his aunt's, and Mrs. Herbert, with her daughters and Damerel, went to the concert. They had a box, and towards the end of the performances a party entered at the opposite side of the room, and sat down. Isabel glanced at them, and then turned away. Damerel saw more—he saw Everhard Seyton in the shadow of the door, and then lost sight of him, by which he concluded he was coming round to their box.

- "Miss Seyton," said he, in a low voice, "do you see that party just come in?"
 - " Yes; --- why?"
- "Do you see the young lady with long ringlets, and a white hat?"
- "The one with a cloak—rather clumsy looking, and very white?"
 - "The same. What do you think of her?"

- "Oh—I hardly know; very well, but not the least pretty, if you mean that."
 - " That is Miss Geraldine Seyton."

Before Isabel had time to express her astonishment, Everhard entered, and asked if there was room in the box for three? There was, and in a few moments he handed in his two cousins, Florence and Geraldine.

"And this!" thought Isabel, as she gazed on the face before her, "this is the beauty so praised!—this is the elegant Geraldine!"

She was disappointed beyond her expecta-

- "You were surprised, I daresay, to see us here," said Geraldine to Isabel; "but it was entirely your brother's plan, on purpose that you should see us without knowing us."
 - "We are wretchedly fagged," said Florence,

- "and mamma is quite 'hors de combat,' however she is ready to see you and my Aunt Herbert, if you will come home with us."
- "Who is that handsome young man behind you?" whispered Geraldine; "I know his face, I rather think I saw him at Rome."
 - " Mr. Damerel," said Isabel.
- "Oh! is he in your suite for to-day only, or is he a regular attaché?"

Isabel coloured crimson, and was at a loss how to answer, when a general move spared her the trouble. Mrs. Herbert went to see the Fane-Seytons the next day, and they returned the call. Still were the expectations on each side slightly disappointed.

"Well, Laura," said Geraldine, when she arrived at home, "Fanny Seyton is pretty, but Isabel hardly good-looking. Mr. Delamayne

must have been quizzing us, to tell us she was anything but plain. What a handsome man that Mr. Damerel is—I'll get introduced to him."

"Well, mamma," said Isabel, when her two cousins were gone, "Geraldine would be pretty with a good figure, but upon my word I tried to think her beautiful, and could not——"

"Our Fanny is prettier," said Mrs. Herbert, quietly.

A few days afterwards, Mrs. Seyton wrote a note to Mrs. Herbert, asking her and her family to dinner.

"What a strange way of inviting us," said Fanny, as she read the note, "only listen—she says it is only a dinner, 'en famille,' that we may get acquainted; and then she adds—'we only expect a very intimate friend, M. d'Avig-

non, with General Hope, and a few gentlemen to meet you; so of course she means us to understand it is a large party."

"I should think not;" said Isabel, "but I am glad we are asked, for I should like to know them better."

"Well, my loves," said Mrs. Herbert, "know them as much as you like in public, but be cautious, in private, how you become intimate—never look close at a fine painting."

Mrs. Herbert Seyton never went to any house early, because she liked the sensation a late arrival causes; and when she entered Mrs. Fane-Seyton's rooms, the dinner company had arrived. Geraldine was not in the room.

- " Miss Seyton, do you know General Hope?" said Herbert Fane-Seyton to Isabel.
- "No," said Isabel, smiling, "and I hardly know who Miss Seyton is."

"Well, Isabel, then—let me introduce you to him. General Hope—Miss Seyton."

General Hope was not young, yet he did not look old; there was an expression of calm gentleness on his fine face which was most winning. His voice was calm yet firm, it had that thrilling sweetness which sinks to the soul. He was rich, unmarried, and an honourable. Mrs. Fane-Seyton never asked any but eligibles to He bowed when introduced to her dinners. Isabel, but no more. Suddenly, the door flew open, and in came Geraldine, with easy grace and perfect nonchalance. She spoke to every one, and throwing herself into a low seat, she allowed her dress to fall round her in folds so graceful, that Fanny Seyton looked at Isabel, and both were instantly convinced that rumour had hardly done her justice.

VOL. I.

"Where is Adolphe?" cried Geraldine, suddenly, "and Guido? Come here, Guido, my compliments to Adolphe, and say I am down." Then turning to Fanny, she said, "Adolphe is so curious, he always will be the last."

Adolphe was M. d'Avignon,—Guido, his Italian friend, the Marchese di Sorrento, a lively companion, but a dark plain-looking personage. Soon afterwards, Adolphe d'Avignon made his appearance, and they went down to dinner. Isabel was handed by Herbert, her cousin; Fanny had Mr. Delamayne, a tame animal, or standing dish of the house; Laura went with General Hope; Florence with Guido di Sorrento; and Geraldine insisted upon taking an arm of Everhard Seyton and Adol-

phe's, as they both advanced at the same moment to hand her down.

- "And now, my honoured cousin," said she to Everhard, as she took her place, "where is your apology for your ungallant conduct, in not assisting me to touch my native land, from the odious Dieppe steamer?"
 - "How was I to know you?" said Everhard.
- "Worse and worse! Adolphe, my cousin says he did not know me at Brighton that evening—'c'est affreux, n'est-ce pas?"
- "Grand Dieu!" exclaimed d'Avignon; "as if the world contained two Geraldines!"
- "Pardon me," said Seyton, "I am now quite prepared to acknowledge it can contain but one."
- "Bon!" said Geraldine, "that is not so bad, considering, is it, Guido? did you hear what

my cousin said—oui? non! well, it is too good for repetition, Adolphe.—Thank you—with much pleasure—Sherry, if you please."

Isabel hardly knew what to think of the strange volubility of her cousins, Florence and Geraldine; they talked incessantly, in French and Italian, across the table, and fairly monopolized the conversation. Laura, the eldest, was a quiet retiring girl, and hardly spoke at all. It was very evident that Geraldine was considered perfection in the family, however, for the first tones of her voice always commanded attention.

"Have you ever been abroad?" said General Hope, turning suddenly towards Isabel.

"Never to reside. I was in Paris for ten days last year. I often regret not having seen more of the continent."

"I never saw an Englishwoman to my taste, after she had been abroad. The residence may polish the manners; but to live a life in rambling in foreign countries, is not the way to bring purity and modesty to perfection."

"You are severe," said Isabel mildly.

"No—I will tell you why I speak warmly though. About nine years ago, I knew that beautiful girl opposite to us, as one of the sweetest children in the world. I met her, after a period of five years, at Rome, and found Geraldine not the same: the remaining four years have elapsed, and now—do you think her mother looks at her with any sort of satisfaction?"

Isabel was astonished. The conduct of General Hope had been quite devoted to her cousin,

when upstairs; and now he passed a severe and unsparing criticism on her.

"I shall never like this man," she thought; and she turned to her cousin Herbert, whose countenance and person in general had caught the complete look of a German student. He was one of those geniuses whom nature sometimes makes; for all his information had been gathered by himself, without assistance. But Isabel marked the deep and hopeless expression of melancholy on his pale but beautiful face with undisguised interest. There was a touch of romance in her, and she fancied Herbert had the look of having been hero of a story or some adventure. Just as she was addressing him, Mrs. Seyton rose, and they adjourned to the drawing-room.

"How melancholy your brother Herbert is," said Isabel to Laura, after dinner.

- "Yes, he is," said Laura quietly. "He always is very silent."
 - "But I meant the expression of his face."
- "Ah!" said Geraldine, "he has lost his ladylove in coming to England—that is the reason.

 She was a German, Adelaide Schlaftenberge,
 and we composed a song of farewell on the
 occasion. You shall hear it when he comes up."
 - " Why not now?"
- "Because you must see his face when I sing it.—Such despair!"
 - "Oh no -sing it now-what are the words?"
- "I won't sing before the gentlemen come up—it is wasting my strains on desert air!"

Isabel was silent.

"Apropos," continued Geraldine; "has my aunt Herbert an opera box? No?—what a pity!—we must have one amongst us. Flo-

rence, would it not be nice?—Pray, Isabel, do you know Colonel Huntley?"

- "Oh yes, very well indeed."
- "He was a great friend of mine once; but I grew tired of him.—Does my aunt Herbert give balls?"
 - "Yes-two in the season."
- "Ah—well, we shall give one when we are settled, I suppose. Apropos, does your friend Mr. Damerel recollect us at Rome?"
- "He says he saw you once at the Chapel of the Embassy," said Fanny Seyton.
- "Ah! did he—yes—I meant then. I'm sure he ought to remember us, for he never took his eyes off us the whole time of service, and he followed us everywhere."
- "Geraldine speaks royally," said Florence,

 "for she says we for I. Mr. Damerel never looked at Laura or me."

There are little wounds that give great pain—there are little stings that inflict exquisite torture. So felt Isabel Seyton: yet why, she knew not. A doubt as to the truth of Geraldine's statement never entered her mind; but she felt disappointed in the veracity of her early friend William Damerel; and yet she said to herself, "Was it likely he could fail to admire her?"

When the gentlemen came up, they asked for music; and Geraldine took her guitar. General Hope sat down at some distance; but MM. D'Avignon and Everhard Seyton stationed themselves close to the songstress.

"My chair is too high," said Geraldine.

"Ah—that is right: now what shall I sing?

Herbert, will you just support the end of my
guitar, for it slips—the string is broken that

fastened the ribbon.—Now don't move, Herbert. Thank you. Isabel, come here, will you, please?—now."

She cleared her ringing voice, and said that she had a cold (of course); and during the preparations, Isabel fixed her eyes on the mournful countenance of her cousin Herbert. It was immoveably calm, whilst Geraldine sang her merry French airs; when suddenly she struck three decided chords, and in a low, melancholy, but beautiful chaunt, articulated distinctly the words, "Bitte-liebe Schlaftenberge!" and stopped. Herbert Seyton suffered an exclamation of anger to escape him, and a contraction of pain crossed his features—the next moment he had left the room.

"How often have I begged you not to sing that song," said Laura to her sister; "you know the reason—it is not kind, really." "Wantonly to wound feelings proclaims a bad heart; and for that I have no pardon—no pity," said General Hope, scating himself near Isabel. "There are some people who have no care—no consideration for others."

Isabel made no reply—her thoughts were far away; and she was recalled to herself by seeing General Hope move away from her to Geraldine.

- "Now, General, tell me the truth," said the songstress; "what were you saying to my cousin about me?"
- "No doubt expressing some general feeling," was the answer.
- "You said," said Geraldine in a low whisper, which was unheard by those around, and lifting her beautiful eyes gently to meet his, "that I had a bad heart!"
- "And should you care for my opinion on a subject so forbidden—to me?" said General

Hope, bending down, apparently fascinated. Geraldine turned her eyes away, but did not lower them, for a bright tear was trembling in them—it was good policy to show that tear. "Geraldine, did you hear me?"

"I—I did—but alas! my heart is too old to be reformed now: yet somehow it is very bitter to hear those we—we—whose opinion I mean we value—ah!"

General Hope never left Geraldine's side the rest of the evening. On retiring to her room at night, she said, in her first triumphant exclamation to Florence, "Isabel tried hard, in her quiet way, for the General; but I got him back in high style!"

CHAPTER III.

- "What do you think of your cousin Geraldine now?" said William Damerel to Isabel one day.
- "She is beautiful, certainly; but you must ask my opinion after our ball, for I have never seen her dressed," answered Isabel.
 - "Your ball is on the tenth?"
 - "Yes-and my aunt Seyton's the twelfth."
- "That was not well-managed on our part," said Fanny; "for now half our beaux will get decoyed to aunt Seyton's."
- "What does that signify, if the parties are on different days?" said Damerel.

- "Oh that is so like you," exclaimed Fanny;

 "you always want reasons. You should learn
 to understand these niceties. Isabel must teach
 you, for I'm going out;" and she left the room.
- "How do you like General Hope?" asked Damerel, after a long pause.
- "Very much," said Isabel; "he is a delightful fatherly man, but somehow—"
 - " What ?"
- "I was going to say a very ridiculous thing—he inspires me with so much respect, that I find myself awed into stupidity before him."
- "He does not seem to think so," said Damerel quickly; "for you have made a conquest there."
- "What nonsense!" laughed Isabel; "besides, Geraldine seems the favoured one; but I wish, Mr. Damerel, you could tell me what makes Herbert look.so wretched?"

- "The tale is very short and very common. He fell in love with a German girl, and by acknowledging a feeling which he was forbidden by his family to encourage, he saddened and destroyed her every prospect, and made himself wretched."
 - " Poor Herbert!"
- "You pity him; do you not think her most deserving of commiseration?"
 - " Perhaps; yet I hardly know."
- "I think so," said Damerel; "for unless love is happy, it is wrong to disclose it—at least so it seems to me: let a man make himself as miserable as he likes, but it is cruel to draw the punishment of his folly on another—I—yes, I, 'Isabel, have loved."

He stopped.

"I think it's going to rain," said Isabel,

walking to the window. He heeded not the interruption.

- "Unworthy as I am—unworthy as I feel myself—yet I have insensibly dared to worship one so infinitely——"
- "Dear me," said poor Isabel, cutting her Berlin canvass all to pieces, "I'm afraid, Mr. Damerel, you are in a bad way."
- "Don't laugh at me, Isabel; you should be the last person to do so."
- "I don't see that," murmured Isabel, almost choking.
- "Then Heaven forbid I should so far forget—Good morning, Miss Seyton."
- "Then it is so!" cried Isabel, throwing herself back, and clasping her hands, when she heard the street-door close; "poor, poor, William!"

Isabel Seyton felt that this moment was her "wakening to life;" for she had never before dared to encourage an idea that the lively, admired, and volatile Damerel could care for her, when he had seen Geraldine! and even at this half-declaration, happy as it made her for one instant, she said to herself, "He may not mean me; he is not safe yet."

Mrs. Fane-Seyton's carriage was well known in the ring of Hyde Park, and well known also was the pale loveliness of Geraldine, and the sparkling gaiety of Florence, seated back to the horses.

- "There goes Mr. Damerel," said Florence, one day as a horseman spurred past them.
- "How I hate that man," exclaimed Geraldine, "he is so shy, so ridiculous; there he goes again. I wonder who he is looking for?"

- " Isabel Seyton, perhaps," said Laura.
- "Why don't you bow to him, my dears," said Mrs. Seyton.
- "We don't know him," said Geraldine; "I don't think he's worth being introduced, for I heard he was not an eligible by any means—ah, there's General Hope, dear old creature—I wish we could see Adolphe—there goes Mr. Damerel again; the man must be mad, or else he is after us."
- "What a story you told Isabel, the other night," said Laura, "about his following us about at Rome, when I am sure he never looked at us."
- "But didn't you see her lip tremble when I said it?" said Geraldine, laughing; "of course I said it on purpose; she fancies he likes her, poor thing—what fun!—if——"

- "I kept it up admirably I'm sure," laughed
- "I can't see any fun in wounding people in that way," said Laura; "it is like poisoning a rose: it looks all fair, whilst the inhaling is a lingering death. It's cruel, Geraldine—you would not like her to take Adolphe from you?"
 - " I shouldn't much care," said Geraldine.
 - " Or General Hope?"
- "Oh, dear old man! I shouldn't let her do that."
- "Geraldine, there's Adolphe," said Florence; "do you want him?"
- "He'll come of himself—how d'ye do, Adolphe; do tell me what makes Mr. Damerel look
 so crazy to-day? How d'ye do, Everhard; any
 news to-day?"
 - "Yes; have you seen Damerel to-day? I

never knew such a lucky dog; his old uncle died last week, and Damerel is now in possession of the Castle Damerel estates, and a clear six thousand a-year!"

"Is it possible!" said Mrs. Fane-Seyton.

"I am most happy for him, indeed; I always thought him such a delightful young man; we saw him at Rome I remember, and I should be only too happy to renew my acquaintance."

"There he is now, leaning on the window of my mother's carriage. I'll bring him to you, and introduce him."

Geraldine watched her cousin speak to Damerel; she saw him smile, then shake his head, then jump into Mrs. Herbert's carriage, and drive away.

"I'll make him rue this," she inwardly exclaimed; and the wild blood flew to her temples, as if the slight had been to her only.

"I'm very sorry," said Everhard Seyton, returning, "but Damerel is obliged to meet the coach at four, and my mother takes him to the office, so he is obliged to—to—"

"Oh, well, some other time, I hope," said Mrs. Fane-Seyton; and then ordering the servants to drive to the Serpentine, she and her daughters got out to walk. They were soon joined by General Hope and d'Avignon, who lingered behind with Geraldine. Adolphe d'Avignon was young, tolerably rich, and eminently handsome; that is, his pale, beautiful features were chiselled off to almost effeminate delicacy; but his large, deep, speaking eyes, gave a wild character to his face, which universally attracted, and seldom failed to charm.

"Geraldine, my mother is in town," said the young officer, bending to a level with the averted eyes and blushing cheek of the beauty.

- " Vraiment!" said Geraldine, hurrying on
- "I must tell Mamma; she will be so happy."
- "Stay, I have much to say," said Adolphe taking her hand; "she has a boon to ask."
 - "What is it?"
- "The inexpressible happiness of your company when we return to Paris. Geraldine, say yes—say you should like it—say something—say it would not be disagreeable to you, Geraldine!"
- "Oh, Adolphe, take care, they will hear you—indeed, they will—I will ask Mamma—I should like it of all things—indeed, I should."
 - "Geraldine, have some pity for me!"
- "Adolphe, for God's sake!" cried Geraldine catching his hand, and agitated beyond control
- "say no more—it must not be—if you love—"
 - "Geraldine, I worship the air you breathe."

- "Oh, be silent, be cautious—it cannot be—
 if I go to Paris with la Baronne, you must not
 come after me—no, it will be wrong, dear
 Adolphe—it will be—"
 - " Say but that-"
- "I can say nothing except that I dare not listen to you; Mamma will accept la Baronne's kind invitation, and send me to Paris—dear, dear, Paris—but not if she knew—"
 - " What, dearest Geraldine?"
 - "That-that-you loved her child!"

There was simple pathos in the tone of Geraldine's tutored voice when she uttered these words. Adolphe paused, and then burst into a passionate entreaty.

"Oh, hush!" whispered Geraldine, "Mamma is going to turn. Look," said she, in her clear ringing voice, "is it possible that is a flower growing on the Serpentine?"

- "It is one fair isolated lily in a bed of weeds," said d'Avignon, and he drew it towards him and plucked it.
- "And you have severed it from them," said Geraldine, reproachfully.
 - " I did, dearest, because it was like you!"
- "It will die now," murmured Geraldine; and she bit her quivering lip, and dashed away the agony of tears that had risen to her eyes.
- "Pardon me, pity me," whispered Adolphe, as the party drew near.
- "I will—all but forget you!" was Geraldine's unheard reply; and commanding her feelings, she sprang into the carriage.
- "What a flirtation you've had with Adolphe," said Florence, laughing; "remember, Geraldine, he is my beau as well as your's."
- "We were talking of his mother; she is just arrived."

"Is she?" said Mrs. Seyton; "then tell them to drive to her hotel, my dear. Apropos, Geraldine, you are to spend a month with her, are you not, when she returns?"

"If you like, mamma."

"Oh yes, my dear; I am sure if you like it you may. Here we are. Pray is Madame d'Avignon here? Oh, she is;—not at home?—Dear me, I'm sorry for that. Give my card, if you please, and compliments. Home!"

"Who has called?" said Geraldine, as they got out at home.

"Madame d'Avignon, Miss; and Colonel Huntly and General Hope, and some other gentlemen, Miss."

"Oh, that's all, is it?" said Geraldine listlessly, and she sauntered up-stairs tired and dispirited.

VOL. I.

This was not the first time that Adolphe d'Avignon had avowed his love to Geraldine; often, from a child, had she listened to a tale which now grew irksome to her: not because the voice that whispered it was less dear, but solely because ambition had filled her young breast; and she panted for rank—for station:—wealth she had—power she possessed—but she aimed at higher things when marriage was on the 'tapis.' Her love for Adolphe was locked in her own breast; his declarations were made in secret; and dearly as she cherished them, a something told her it was not right.

"I must put a stop to it;" said she, as she recovered from one of the passions of tears in which she often indulged in secret. "Adolphe must give me up, for I can endure this no longer. I will tell him so at the ball to-morrow."

The first quadrille — the first waltz,—the second quadrille and the second waltz, had past by in Mrs. Herbert Seyton's beautiful rooms, and Isabel, in all her dignified elegance, was looking happiness itself on Damerel's arm, when suddenly there was a pressing forward at the door, and the crowd partly divided. The Fane-Seytons had arrived, and with them a whole detachment of young men: some foreigners—some military; in short, the sensation was great. Isabel was rather behind the group, and could see them, unobserved. Mrs. Seyton looked very elegant, Laura very ladylike, Florence pretty and merry,—but it was on Geraldine that Isabel fixed her eyes. Leaning on the arm of Adolphe d'Avignon, she advanced so calmly, so modestly, that she insensibly won all the admiration. Her beautiful sunny hair

was hanging round her face, without any ornament: but her figure, which till this night had never been seen, was the principal point of attraction. Isabel glanced at the long fair throat, the delicate rounded shoulders, from which her dress seemed almost falling, the beautiful, stately, yet graceful back, and the bare snowy arms.

- "You were right," said Isabel to Damerel;
 "that Geraldine is perfection! what an exquisite
 figure—what a face!"
- "I beg your pardon," said Damerel; "you must have mistaken me. I never admired your cousin—and I never can."
- "Now that is perverse," said Isabel; "and I should like the triumph of making you a convert to the general opinion. Let me introduce you to her."

- "No, no, indeed; I am quite contented with those I know: let me remain so."
 - "Geraldine, are you engaged?" said Isabel.
 - "For the next four:—but why?"
 - "May I introduce Mr. Damerel to you?"
- "Oh, no; pray excuse me: it is no use, for I declare I do not know how many deep I am—thank you, Isabel. What a delightful ball!"

Damerel heard the whole of this sentence; and the expression of pique and annoyance on his fine countenance astonished Isabel when she returned to him. Soon after, Geraldine was flying round the room in a rapid waltz with Adolphe; and they kept it up so long, that breathless and exhausted she sank into a seat in the window, behind a curtain. D'Avignon fanned her.

"Adolphe," said she, in a low whisper; "I want to speak to you—this may be my only

opportunity. You remember our conversation by the Serpentine some days ago?"

"I do, Geraldine."

"Then in one word hear me: never, on any pretence, introduce that subject again. No argument will move my determination—never again! as you value my happiness."

"Que je t'aime!" cried d'Avignon, in an emphatic whisper, and his arm was round the slender waist in an instant.

"Adolphe! M. d'Avignon!" exclaimed Geraldine, starting forward, with her eyes sparkling with anger and indignation.

"Go: you shall be obeyed;" muttered Adolphe, and he leant back in the window and folded his arms, with a countenance fixed in despair.

"I cannot enter the room alone," said Geraldine; "il faut respecter les convenances."

The young Frenchman bent forward, offered his arm, and joined the waltzers—as if nothing had passed. Geraldine heard the murmurs of admiration that followed her everywhere; yet when her eyes rested on the happy face of Isabel, who stood near her talking to Damerel, she thought to herself: "She is more to be envied than I; but I will win Damerel yet."

- "I find I must go and look after my new estates again;" said Damerel to Isabel, with whom he was dancing for the third time. "I shall not be absent long, but I must be off to-morrow."
- "To-morrow! so soon?" said Isabel; "you will not, surely, miss my aunt's ball?"
- "I can't help it;—I wish I could—are you to be at it?"
 - "Yes; -of course."
 - "Then I am more sorry still, but it is quite

unavoidable: go I must. Dance with me once more, to make up for my disappointment."

"I shall be very happy. But look at Geraldine, how pale she looks—yet how beautiful!"

"Why-y-e-s-she may be beautiful,—she is so. She looks better pale. I should like to dance with her once this evening."

A very slight chill came over Isabel—a sort of inward shudder.

- "Geraldine," said she, at the close of the waltz; "are you tired?"
 - "I have such a headache! dear Isabel."
 - "Mr. Damerel begs to be introduced to you."

The colour flew into Geraldine's cheeks, and her smile to Mr. Damerel's bow was bright and triumphant.

"I pique myself on my memory," said she; "have we not met before in a sunnier land?"

- "I am proud to have been honoured with a place in your memory," answered Damerel; "that meeting was in the Chapel of the Embassy."
- "It was. How curious it seems to meet people in one's own country, after having seen them as strangers in a foreign one; it gives one a sort of interest in them. What a beautiful waltz Weippert is playing."
 - " May I not tempt you to join it?"
- "Oh, Mr. Damerel, you don't know how tired I am!"
 - "Then the next?"
- "Most happy; but never mind me. I should be quite distressed to keep you from the dancers—pray join them."
- "On the contrary, I prefer this seat," said Damerel; and he threw himself into a chair by

the side of Geraldine, whose heart beat in a tumult of joy.

There is a simile in Scripture, which, without any intention of profane parody, may truly be thus rendered: "There is more triumph in winning one unwilling heart, than in possessing ninety and nine vanquished ones." Let my readers find out what I mean.

- "Have you been introduced to mamma yet,
 Mr. Damerel?"
 - "I have not had the honour; but---"
- "Oh, never mind—my invitation is as good as hers, you know. Shall we have the pleasure of seeing you the day after to-morrow?—We have a ball; perhaps Isabel told you?"
- "I exceedingly regret, I assure you, that it is out of my power, for I leave town to-morrow."
- "Oh, no, Mr. Damerel! Where are you going?"

- "To Northumberland. My affairs there are in a most unsettled state."
- "Will you be quite ruined if you delay your important journey two days?"
- "No; but, really, I assure you I am very much annoyed. I can't get off—indeed I can't."
- "Are you accustomed to be spoilt amongst your English friends? Do you venture to offend with impunity, Mr. Damerel?"
- "What can I say? But this is the second waltz, may I claim your promise?"
- "I am quite ready; but, remember, I give you to the end of this waltz to consider whether you ever dance with me again, or not. Allons!"

There was a tempest in miniature in William Damerel's breast. He was not aware that the languid Geraldine of an hour before, had heard his refusal of Isabel's request that he would stay

for her aunt's ball. He thought on what Isabel might feel, if he changed his mind, and he thought on his own good fortune in awakening an interest in the beautiful Miss Seyton. Personal vanity, alas! has a place in every breast, however perfect, and he was not proof against the delicate, guarded, and apparently unconscious flattery that fell from Geraldine's rosy lips.

- "Mamma is going; may I introduce you?" said Geraldine, after a long silence; "but tell me first, what effect has this waltz of penance had on you?"
- "You have conquered—as usual," said Damerel, laughing; and the next moment he was introduced to Mrs. Fane-Seyton, who engaged him in so long a conversation, that he found himself in the street handing them into the carriage, before he was aware he had left the ball-

mom; to which, however, he returned, to make his parting bows.

- "Good night," said Isabel; "I suppose this is goodbye for a time?"
- "Why—no," answered Damerel, colouring up to his forehead; "I don't think I shall leave town to-morrow."
 - " Indeed," said Isabel; and she turned away.
- "Then we shall see you at aunt Seyton's?" said Fanny, for which interrogation Isabel thanked her from her very soul.
- "Yes. Mrs. Seyton, or rather Miss Geraldine, was so good as to ask me."
- "Then, as we have a place in our carriage, perhaps you would like to go with us to the ball?" said Mrs. Herbert.
- "Thank you," stammered Damerel, again colouring, "I am exceedingly obliged—but—but—thank you—I dine there that day!"

He wished good night again, hurriedly and confusedly, and then turned to repeat the same to Isabel; but she was no longer there. She had left the room.

"Fool, idiot that I am!" was his passionate exclamation, as he almost ran through the cold, clear, quiet streets; "luckless fellow that I am, to be charmed by that girl Geraldine. But, by Jove! she never fascinates me again! Isabel, I have lost you!"

"This is to be wretched, indeed," murmured Isabel, as she sat before her mirror, and the dawn of a spring morning beamed through the half-closed shutters upon her pale cheek and streaming eyes; "how little I thought Geraldine had power to win him in one hour, when I had failed in years!"

"Isabel, are you asleep?" said a voice from a remote canopy in the corner of the room.

- " No, my dear girl, I'm not in bed."
- "Good heavens, and yet you were so tired!

 Do be quick, for that light keeps me awake. It

 was a delightful ball, was it not? How many

 times did you dance with Damerel?"
- "Four. Don't talk, Fanny dear;—go to sleep."

There is nothing aggravates grief more than the necessity of concealing it!

CHAPTER IV.

HITHERTO nothing has been said of the two Seyton fathers; and, indeed, it seems almost vain to introduce them, as they formed no part of the family, except at breakfast and dinner. Mr. Fane-Seyton was an opulent man—a rising sun—and an M.P. He was stern and severe to a fault; yet, if there was one of his family whom he indulged, it was Geraldine. She always went by the title of "my pet," and was treated accordingly. He watched her with a jealous eye, and it was with pride and satisfaction that he

marked the sensation her beauty created in England. Often in Florence had sculptors asked permission to take her bust, but Mr. Seyton thought that was simply foreign enthusiasm. At Rome, a painter begged and entreated she might form the subject of an altar-piece, ordered by the monks of St. L., representing the Mater Dolorosa, for which, when she chose, Geraldine's countenance was eminently calculated; yet still Mr. Seyton thought "these fellows mean it only as a compliment," and the compliment was declined. But when a President of the R. A. openly admired her, and told Mr. Seyton that it was almost a sin that her picture should not grace the Academy, then Mr. Seyton believed the reports of his child's beauty, and he added pride to the list of his feelings towards her. He had once refused a peerage,

—now he felt he should like to ennoble his children; and he had actually, on the morning of his ball, been petitioning his friend the Duke of —, to hint to the higher powers his inclination to accept the Earldom of Chester!

Mr. Herbert Seyton was a rich banker, and business engrossed him so completely, that he gave up going out. To sketch him, therefore, 'à quoi bon?'

When the Herbert Seytons entered the ballroom, even Fanny could not help remarking
how different had been the arrival and reception of her cousins at her house; but Isabel
cared not for that; she was too gentle, too
amiable, to feel hurt at another's superiority.
She was wholly absorbed by one couple in the
room, who were standing by a mirror,—it was
Geraldine and William Damerel; Geraldine not

quietly, simply dressed—but Geraldine sparkling in beauty, around whose beautiful figure hung the rich folds of white satin—her hair, hanging no longer in long curls, was banded in the style now called " à la Grisi," and on her forehead was a simple diamond, flashing all colours every time she moved. Damerel was in the highest spirits, and Isabel saw, by the reflection of the mirror, that he was petitioning in his own lively way for one of the three roses which formed a centre to Geraldine's corsage. Geraldine laughed, and placed her hand on their stems, as if to guard them; however, the movement failed, for a white bud fell at his feet, and, triumphantly snatching it, he placed it in his coat. The quadrille ended at that moment, and Adolphe d'Avignon, starting forward, claimed her for the succeeding valse. Damerel turned at the sound of the enlivening dance, and, seeing Isabel, instantly engaged her.

"How late you are," said he, as they paused after the first round; "you cannot think how I—how late it seems," he added hastily.

"I don't think we are," said Isabel; "for the rooms are not full yet."

"Then I judged by my impatience—I counted hours by my feelings. Until this moment I have felt that this ball was imperfect—I felt that something was missing, and yet I could not tell what it was—until now!"

Isabel's heart beat so fast and loud, that she did not venture to reply; and when Damerel spoke again, it was on other subjects. Each time that Isabel looked at him, she saw nothing but the white rose-bud, and she felt that the sight of it chilled her cordiality. After the

waltz she sat down, and Damerel stood by her; there was a vacant seat, but he never betrayed any inclination to take it; and, in a few minutes, General Hope became the possessor; not to Isabel's annoyance, because she never felt annoyed at attention from him, for he paid it to so few, but she was vexed to see Damerel leave her instantly.

- "How well my cousin, Geraldine, looks to night," was Isabel's first remark.
- "Yes;" said the General, "but I cannot admire that ceaseless gaiety--it is fatiguing, for it keeps the spirits in constant exertion; and for my part, I cannot keep up with it at all. I am sorry to see such a beautiful girl throwing away her time upon such coxcombs as—"
- "Isabel, may I have the pleasure?" interrupted Herbert Seyton; and she was carried

away, at the very moment when she would have given worlds to have heard the conclusion of that sentence.

"How warm these rooms are," said Seyton,

come into the conservatory—shall I get you
an ice?"

"If you please;" said Isabel, and she leant against a beautifully trained orange tree, which formed a sort of arbour in the middle of the spacious conservatory; in doing this, one of the branches gave way, and Isabel instantly became aware of the presence of two others besides herself. On one knee, before the agitated figure of Geraldine, was Adolphe d'Avignon—his face uplifted in an attitude of entreaty;—she, apparently fascinated by the gaze, was trying to turn away, whilst her struggling hand was clasped to the lips of d'A-

vignon. There were many other glittering forms amongst the flowers of that conservatory, yet Isabel's startled ear heard, through all the noise of voice and music, these words sobbed forth by Geraldine's stifled voice:

"I cannot deceive my mother—it would break papa's heart; and when he trusts me so confidingly to Madame d'Avignon's care—oh! Ado!phe, it is too treacherous!"

Isabel started unconsciously, and the next moment she found they had observed her.

Adolphe was gone in an instant, and Geraldine sprung forward.

- " Isabel! oh my God!"
- "Geraldine, my dear Geraldine, be calm;" said Isabel, "we are not alone command yourself."
 - "You have heard all!-oh! what will

become of me!—Isabel, I throw myself on your mercy—on your honour."

"I entreat you to take care; indeed, I have heard little, and that little I do not understand; but take care, for I expect Herbert every moment; there he is with my ice!" and turning to her cousin, with ready presence of mind, she said, "Will you bring me a cream ice? I do not like water; I will give this to Geraldine."

"Thank you, thank you, a thousand times," said Geraldine, as she recovered herself, "that was so well done. Isabel, I may trust you—you will not betray me, will you?"

"Never!" said Isabel; and in five minutes the natural 'hardiesse' of Geraldine conquered a moment of weakness, and she descended to the supper-room the brilliant flirt once more.

" I shall say goodbye for three months, to-

night," whispered Damerel, leaning over the chair, on which Isabel was seated at supper.

- " Then you really go to-morrow?"
- "Yes, I resign all the pleasures of the season, because dull duty calls me. I suppose when I return—I mean—I dare say, before I come back, I shall have to congratulate you on your change of—of—"
- "Oh! no," said Isabel, innocently, "my uncle's peerage will not affect us, I believe; if he gets it, that is to say."
- "I did not mean that—I meant, I shall greet you under different circumstances, perhaps."
- "Yes, you will," said Isabel, smiling; "we all sincerely rejoice in your good fortune, I assure you."
- "You are determined to misunderstand me," said Damerel, impatiently, "I must then vol. 1.

plainly tell you, I expect I shall not see you as Miss Seyton any more."

"Oh!—oh!—I—I—what nonsense—I—what made such a thing enter your head?" stammered Isabel.

"Is the report true? is General Hope indeed the fortunate victor?"

"Good Heavens! no," exclaimed Isabel, looking up with the greatest astonishment, "what a strange idea! he is old enough to be my father."

"So I thought, but Miss Geraldine Seyton-"

"Mr. Damerel," cried Geraldine, across the table, "there are two almonds in this shell, will you be my Philippe?—catch—" and she tossed him one as he approached.

"That was hardly kind, to say the least,"

which the absence of attention from one can bring. At the same time, she felt that had she manœuvred as skilfully as her cousin, she might have kept him. The consequence of Damerel's last sentence to Isabel was, that the next time she caught General Hope's eye, she coloured crimson, and turning away, met a significant smile from Geraldine, which provoked her beyond expression.

- "Isabel," whispered Geraldine, as the Herbert Seytons were going, "are you ever alone in the day?"
- "Yes, when I don't go out with Mamma in the carriage."
 - "Give me an hour to-morrow?"
 - " Three o'clock."

Geraldine vanished, and General Hope came

with Isabel's cloak, for which she had one moment before sent Damerel, and he then offered her his arm, but the staircase was too narrow for three, and Fanny, who was on the other side, instantly exclaimed—

"Isabel, go to Mr. Damerel, will you, for my hapless sleeves are crushed to death here?"

Damerel laughed at this manœuvre; and as he stood by the carriage steps, whispered: "Isabel, don't forget me."

- "Very nice ball, wasn't it?" said Fanny, as they drove home.
- "Delightful, I never enjoyed anything more," was Isabel's reply; yet she hardly heard her sister's remark, for she was harrassed by what she had heard both from Damerel and Geraldine, and she longed for the explanation the next day would bring.

"Your cousins were beautifully dressed," said Mrs. Herbert; "and I think I must get you both satin dresses; they look so rich yet simple."

CHAPTER V.

- "Now to confession, Isabel," said Geraldine sadly; "I know you think me worse than an —I see you do; but try to forget my foreig education—try to think I have an English hear and English principles still!"
- "Indeed, Geraldine, I never mean to sit is judgment upon you; I only listen and advise."
- "Well, well, but tell me then whether could help Adolphe's asking me to—to marr him secretly?"
 - "No; but your conduct previously must have

encouraged him to so daring a proposal; he thinks you love him."

- " Alas !"
- "Geraldine, do not say yes!—you cannot are for a man who would ask you to deceive your parents."

Geraldine hid her face in her hands.

- "If it is so, why not refer him to them?" continued Isabel.
- "Because I would not have him," said Geraldine, bursting into tears; "my heart may rebel, but my pride shall conquer, even if I die for it. Isabel, do you not think I was made for better things than to be the wife of Adolphe, who, though a good 'parti' in some respects, is not fit for me."
- "Yet you have almost confessed you do love him," said Isabel; and you know if you ac-

company his mother to Paris, you tacitly encourage him."

- "But, dear Isabel, if I refused this invitation, papa or mamma would suspect the reason, and then papa would say it was wrong of me, and that it was my own fault in flirting so with Adolphe; and then there is Guido di Sorrento— Heaven knows what I am to do with him!"
- "Geraldine, why do you flirt in this way? It is exceedingly wrong of you."
- "I know it, but I cannot help it—there is a knock at the door—say not at home, do, Isabel."
- "Not at home to any one," said Isabel; and the next moment William Damerel's card was brought up—" Mr. Damerel, P.P.C."
- "Ah! now you are very angry with me," said Geraldine; "you would have admitted him."

- "Not I, indeed; I never see gentlemen when mamma is out—you see it is only his P.P.C. visit."
- "You have known Mr. Damerel some years?" said Geraldine, in a low voice.
 - " Seven long years," said Isabel, smiling.
- "Ha!" exclaimed the beauty; "then hear my parody—
 - " Seven long years I've loved thee, William; Seven long years my fee was scorn!"
- "I should never acknowledge to either of those lines, nor would he," replied Isabel; "but talk of yourself, Geraldine—never mind him."
- "I have told you all," said Geraldine; goodness, how red my eyes are. I have told you how he loved me as a child—how I once idolized Adolphe—how my love subsided when I became a coquette; and how his increased

when other people were pleased to like me how and where his last declaration took place; and, finally, how he nearly tempted me, had it not been for you, to lose the proud name I now bear of my father's best-loved child; and now, Isabel, I have but one favour to ask—betray me not."

- "I will not."
- "Let no word, no hint, no look, ever escape you of the subject of this my confession?"
 - " It never shall, Geraldine."
- "Even if you should one day learn to hate me, will your lips still be sealed?"
- "No injury that you could inflict, even were you likely to do me one, would make me break a promise, and I do promise."

Geraldine tied her bonnet on in silence; her tears were choking her; she wrung her cousin's hand in silence.

- "You will not walk home alone; let me send one of the men with you;" said Isabel, kindly.
- "No, thank you, Isabel; I'm not going straight home; I must go into the Park, and let the 'wild winds' blanch these cheeks and my poor red eyes."
 - "Oh, my dear Geraldine, don't go there."
 - " But my footman is below."
- "Even then do not go into the Park; indeed you will be sure to—to meet some one."
- "You mean Adolphe? I dare say I shall, but he knows when I am in an ill-humour he dare not join me; good bye, and thank you, Isabel."
 - "When shall I see you again?"
- "Not at all, for Madame d'Avignon starts the day after to-morrow; pity me, Isabel."
 - " Write to me, Geraldine, will you?"
- "Yes, certainly—good bye—remember your promise."

Isabel was alone.

"And is it possible," murmured she, "that this envied creature is so unhappy!—and with that calm, clear, heavenly face of her's!"

Amiable and mild as was every feeling of Isabel Seyton's breast, she could not help one bound of gladness when her cousin left the room, to think, in the first place, that Geraldine was leaving the scene of her power, and in the next, that her affections were engaged; and Isabel instantly decided in her own mind that her suspicions of Damerel's decoy had been the flight of her imagination only. Isabel was happy then!

In his study, grave and thoughtful, sat Mr. Fane-Seyton, revolving in his mind how he should walk up to the nervous table in the Upper House, when he took his oaths and honours as a

peer of the realm; when his ears should be saluted with the honourable sound, from link-boy lips, at club and carouse, of "the Earl of Chester's carriage!" He wondered how he should look—alas! poor Mr. Fane-Seyton was a weak man, to say the best of him; yet he rose—so do bubbles.

The door opened quietly as he sat thus, and Herbert, with a countenance of deep grief, entered.

- " Are you at liberty, my dear father?"
- "Yes, to be sure—come in, Herbert—what is it?"
- "I will be brief, sir, not to tire your patience, and come to my story at once.—Is your determination, forbidding my acquaintance with Adelaide Schlaftenberg, irrevocable?"
- "I thought you had forgotten her," said Mr. Seyton, drawing in his lip.

-Na" answered Herbert, turning of a still mare ashy hose: "I remember her well."

It required all his fortitude to make this calm reply, and he continued:

- May I know decidedly whether you still circut to my renewing our acquaintance?"
- "Good heavens. Herbert! are you aware that in a week you will be Lord Seyton?"
- "Will that be any bar to my happiness?" said Herbert mildly.
- "Yes!" cried the Earl-expectant, exasperated, and dashing his hand on the table. "I never will, by Heaven! give my consent to see that girl your wife. I never liked the connexion; and this Peerage places her at even a more immeasurable distance than ever!"
- "That is all I wished to know," replied the son; and his contracted lip seemed convulsed with agitation. "You are firm, sir?"

"As a rock."

- "Then my doom is sealed. My dear father, I am of age—my will is my own. This morning brought me a letter, saying that Adelaide was ill; and I am now starting to see her once more. You once threatened to disinherit me—my feelings are steeled, and I care not for it. We shall never intrude on you in England, but try to live on what I can earn in Germany."
- "Earn!" cried Mr. Seyton. "My son earn his livelihood!—my only son earn! No, sir! If you must marry this girl, do—I have nothing to say to that. I—yes—bring her to England. I will allow you both an ample allowance, on one condition."
 - "And that, sir?"
- "That she does not enter this family, nor, in public, bear our name!"

The indignant blood rushed to Herbert's brown cheek—tears started to his manly eyes—he tried to speak—he could not.

"Did you hear me?" said Mr. Seyton.

"Would to God I had not heard such words from my father's lips!" answered Herbert; "but it is not for me to find fault with any sentiment uttered by him."

Noiselessly, Herbert—the warm, the good, the affectionate Herbert—turned, and left the room. His father spoke not, moved not, till roused by the violent slamming of the street door—he then caught the bell, and rang violently. He was too late, for Herbert had jumped into the first cab, and was gone.

A letter to his mother on his embarkation, told her of his plans—his hopes, and his unalterable resolution to live for the only being he could ever love.

"I dare say they miss Geraldine very much;" said Fanny Seyton, as the Herbert Seytons sat together one evening after dinner. "What a pity she is not here to hear us all calling her Lady Geraldine."

"I never saw any one take her honours more composedly than Lady Laura," said Isabel, laughing; "for yesterday she hardly knew who I meant when I said 'How is Lady Chester?"

"I wonder how Geraldine likes the D'Avignons," said Fanny; "half the family are strangers to her."

- "By the bye," said Everhard Seyton, "one of you told me there was something between her and young D'Avignon!"
 - "Not I, I'm sure;" said Isabel.
- "Nor I; I only guessed it—suspected it;" said Fanny.

- "Well, whoever told me, told a confounded story; for I saw D'Avignon to-day, and he told me he had no intention of leaving town at present."
- "Master would be glad to see Miss Seyton in the library;" said a servant, entering.

These summonses were so common that Isabel walked quietly into the library, and took her seat opposite to her father with perfect composure.

- "Well, papa?"
- "Have you had any letters to-day, my dear?"
- " No, papa."
- "But I have; have you expected one lately?"
- "I did think I might lear from Geraldine; but I have not as yet."
- "Then there is one that I fancy you could hardly expect;" said Mr. Seyton, and he handed

her an open letter. He watched her read it—he was first the colour fade from her cheek, then return crimson—then the small white hands trembled, shook, and finally clasped themselves over her eyes.

"Well, Isabel, my child?"

To expect an answer was quite vain.

"Shall I write to him, or will you?"
Still silence.

"Take care, Isabel; suppose you take the letter upstairs. Give me an answer in an hour, for you see that the gentleman will not wait with any patience."

Isabel looked up, and shaking her head, handed the letter back to her father.

"My decision is made," she said, calmly;
"it is silly and useless to waver, when I know
my hesitation can end but in one way—in yes."

"Then I congratulate you, my dearest; you have won the highest prize in our whole circle of acquaintance, in William Damerel."

And thus had William Damerel proposed to Isabel. In person, his letter said, he had not dared; by letter to her he would not until he had hope; he therefore wrote to her father, asking the precious gift, and promising, in winning it, to come up to town the moment he could leave Northumberland.

"I am the happiest of creatures breathing!" exclaimed Isabel to Fanny, when they were alone. "How kind and honourable of him to wait till he could give me such a comfortable home as I have! Oh, Fanny, what a proud wife I shall be!"

"I am utterly enchanted," said Fanny, "that the Seytons had no hand in it. How annoyed aunt Chester will be to have lost him for Lady Geraldine!"

Mr. Seyton kept the secret till his future sonin-law arrived, and then he duly informed his lordly brother and family of it.

"Good Heavens!" said Florence. "I wish Geraldine had been here! she never would have allowed him to do this!"

"I don't see how any one could help it," said Laura; "he wrote from Castle Damerel, you see, so it was cleverly done,—but I dare say he has been in love with her for ages."

"Oh, not he!" laughed Florence, scornfully; "he was nearly caught by Geraldine. However, I don't think it is such a fine match, for she is older than Mr. Damerel."

"Oh no, Florence, Isabel is just twenty, and Mr. Damerel looks full three-and-twenty."

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"I can't help his looks, but I am certain he is very little older than Isabel, at all eve but what will Geraldine say?"

CHAPTER VI.

Chester received a letter from Madame d'Avignon, stating that Geraldine had not been well for some time; that her spirits were very low, and, in short, that she did not know what to do, and therefore wrote to his Lordship. The Earl's immediate determination was to recall his child; and Lady Geraldine came. Even her sisters were shocked to see the change in the once brilliant girl; the large beautiful eyes, once so flashing, were darker, and mournfully languid; the rosy pouting lips were compressed

and sometimes contracted; yet every feature was so delicately lovely in its soft languor, that it was almost impossible to feel that any one charm was wanting. She was invariably silent on the subject of her visit to Paris and Damerel's proposals, yet she answered questions and listened patiently to all her sisters told her. At last, Isabel came to see her. Lady Geraldine sat alone in the drawing-room, when her cousin arrived, for his sisters were out with the Countess; and as Isabel hastened towards her, the colour flushed the transparent cheek, and Geraldine burst into tears.

"This is a most inhospitable way of greeting you, when I ought to congratulate;" said she, as Isabel's lips met her's. "Yet I am so glad, dear Isabel—indeed I am. How is Mr. Damerel—is he in town?"

- "Oh yes, in town of course; but, my dear Geraldine, you are ill."
- "No: they think so, but I am not. Am I thin?—have I grown a fright?"
- "You look better than when you went, I think; but now tell me all about your adventures in Paris."
- "I see what you want to ask—was Adolphe there? No, Isabel; Madame d'Avignon has two elder sons, fine young men, who were there, but they were not like Adolphe. She had also a daughter."
 - "Were you happy with her?"
- "No, Isabel,—but ask no more. I was wretched, and longing to come back. I was so restless—so constantly fearful of one thing or another, that I felt if I did not come home I should die."

VUL. I.

- "Were you astonished to hear of me and William Damerel?"
- "No;" said Lady Geraldine, colouring crimson. "I knew he would propose to you."
 - " How?"
- "Is it not a very warm afternoon, Isabel?" said her cousin; "it is either very warm or I am very faint. Isabel, tell me the truth—do I look ill?—look at me well."

Isabel looked long and fixedly at her cousin. Geraldine was extended in a chaise-longue: her slight fawn-like figure was enveloped in a white morning gown, and her bright hair hung in its own long curls on the crimson satin of the chair—her face, from which the colour had faded, was pale as death—yet so transparent, that, on her throat, temples, forehead, and nose, were perceptible the pale blue veins.

"Indeed you do not;" was the answer when Isabel's scrutiny had ended. "But why are you so anxious to know?—how do you feel?"

Geraldine took no notice of this question; she only turned away, and then said: "I suppose Mr. Damerel proposed in person?"

- "No-by letter," said Isabel.
- "Ah, well; all the better. I suppose you are very happy, are you not?"
 - "Oh, the happiest of the happy, Geraldine."
- "Well, you are so calm upon it; do you know, if I could ever have the man I love, I should dance out of the window!"
- "Then I hope some day to see that dance;" said Isabel, smiling, and again pressing her lips on Geraldine's forehead.
- "It will be the dance of death;" murmured the young girl.

"That depends on the height of the window;" said Isabel, laughing.

"Ah, Isabel, you may laugh, because you are so happy now," added Geraldine, and her voice died away; "but I am not joking. You will think of my words some day."

Soon afterwards Isabel took her departure, and Lady Geraldine watched her light airy step down the street.

"She shall never have him," said she, sinking back; "never! I will get him back, if I lose Adolphe for it. She shall never have him! I have always power as long as my face lasts. I will get him back!"

"I have just seen Geraldine," said Isabel to Damerel, as she entered the drawing-room and found him seated there; "have you called yet, William?"

"No; I have not. Shall I?"

"Oh yes, I think so, certainly. Geraldine is ill, I am afraid; but she is much more lovely than she was three months ago."

"She is your cousin, my own Isabel, or I could not look at her twice."

"How strange," said Isabel, smiling; "yet I am not particularly sorry, I confess."

That evening a note—a printed note—arrived, couched in the following terms:—

"The Earl and Countess of Chester request the pleasure of Mr. and Mrs. and the Misses Seyton's company at dinner, on Friday the 7th, at seven o'clock."

And then there was a small inclosure, with a similar invite to Mr. Damerel.

- "Shall we go?" said Mrs. Seyton.
- "I'd much rather not;" said Isabel, looking at Damerel.

"I'll do just as you do, of course;" was his-

"Let's go;" said Fanny. "I want to seehow Lady Geraldine behaves."

Isabel bit her lip, and looked down.

"I'm afraid we must," said Mrs. Seyton; because they have asked us before, and we could not go."

So it was decided, and the acceptation was dispatched. The invitation was a three weeks' notice, and the Seytons concluded the party would in consequence be large.

Isabel had on a white silk dress, which suited her figure, and on entering the drawing-room Damerel admired it.

"I am going to ask you such a favour;" said Isabel, as he was shawling her.

" Granted already."

- "Well, it is, do not notice me much this evening; most likely my cousins will be watching us—will you notice me very little, my dear William?"
- "Oh, Isabel, this is silly—indeed it is; they all know how we are placed."
- "That is the very reason. Oblige me in this whim—will you?"
- "Will? of course your will is my law; but as you have asked a favour, so will I. If I forbear to notice you before dinner, let my reward be a seat next to you after dinner—let me be near you then!"

The laugh that followed was in token of assent, and the party started.

The room was full of titles when the Seytons entered. Lady Chester was apparently thinking them all a great bore; but the Earl was in his

element. Isabel looked round the room for Geraldine in vain.

"You are looking for my poor little girl," said the Countess, "she is not here; for I am sorry to say she is not equal to a dinner. You will see her by and by."

Isabel sat between General Hope and a stranger, and was uncomfortable enough; but when the ladies rose, she promised herself some reward in a tête-à-tête with Damerel; for it is possible to enjoy one very completely even in a dinner-party.

Lady Geraldine was sitting at the open window, enjoying the cool night-air which was blowing the long waving hair off her face, when the party entered. She did not get up, but shook hands all round, and had some lively speech for every one. Directly Isabel saw her,

she felt out of conceit with her own dress. Geraldine had on a simple white net, through every hem of which was pink ribbon. The dress was not meant for display, it looked so invalided, yet so elegant. It had long sleeves, and was high up to the throat, with a small frill; yet never had its wearer studied her mirror to better purpose—she knew her ground!

- " How are you to-night?" said Isabel.
- "Better- really a shade better, thank you.
 How do you like my album, Isabel?"
 - "I have not seen it."
- "No?—oh, Florence, do show my new book. I brought it from Paris, Isabel. My friends have been generous, too; and its contents are really worth the binding. Oh, don't look at it here; go to the table near the lamp, or you lose half its beauty."

Now the table was in the centre of the room, and thither Isabel and Florence went, leaving Geraldine in the window. A few minutes after, the gentlemen began to enter, and as they one by one came in, her young ladyship threw back her graceful head, and watched until Damerel appeared. She saw him only glance at her, and bow, and then turn to seek his 'fiancée,' who was stooping over the album, under the full glare of the lamp, so that both light and attitude were unfavourable.

Geraldine, on the contrary, was in her most carelessly elegant position, surrounded by white muslin draperies and flowers, and just placed to have the light, softened by distance, on her beautiful face. When she saw the direction of his eyes and steps, she adroitly arrested them by a low musical—

" How d'ye do, Mr. Damerel?"

He stopped—bowed—and was passing; but she held out her hand.

- "Come and be felicitéd. I declare I have not seen you for two months! How many important things may take place in a short time! I find I have to congratulate you, Mr. Damerel, since we last met, which you will believe I have the greatest pleasure in doing; though I daresay you think, not having been at the scene of action, that I have very little interest in it?"
- "Pardon me," said Damerel; "I was always sure you would rejoice in my good fortune."
- "So I do sincerely. Aunt Seyton told me the grand secret. At least, she told me that Castle Damerel was shortly to have a mistress; and made me guess the lady."
 - " And you guessed her, of course, directly?"

• Why do you wish a ralding.

- " Did you not?-Oh.
- "No, indeed, I did 1 don't seat yourself there I know you wish me in get up, and go to Isabel,
- "I shan't stir till you te the lady was," said Dames
- "Nay, then, I supported you although surrounded by cannot be so cruel as to de

- Let than—I don't know whom!"
- "How strange," mused Damerel. "I always thought we were made for each other."
- "She's such a dear girl; I am so fond of er," said Geraldine; "but—"
 - "But what?"
- "I was merely thinking bow strangely things come round. Isabel is the very last person in the world that I should have fixed on for you."
 - " And why so?" said Damerel, hastily.
 - " Because you are such opposites."
 - "Contrasts always fancy each other, don't you know?"
 - "So they do; yet I should have thought Isabel, dear elegant creature as she is, would the the very last girl in the universe that

- "You make me dreadfully curious; do not be so provoking."
- "There is Isabel looking round. Go and look at the album she has in her hand."
 - " Will you come too?"
- "Alas! I am positively afraid of the heat of the room, and have therefore stationed myself next to this open window; for, latterly, I am sorry to say, I have got into the habit of fainting. But never mind me—pray don't."
- "Tell me why you think Isabel and I are not fitted for each other?" said Damerel, never moving.
- "Oh, because—because you are so lively and warm, and a little—little bit hasty; and she is so calm, so soft, so gentle, so perfectly placid."
 - " She is so," murmured Damerel.
 - "Besides which, you are—as far as I can

judge—so capable of—of—loving deeply, devotedly, and—oh, I shan't go on."

- " Do, I entreat, I implore you!"
- "Well, I should be so terrified that you might think any love less ardent—less open than your own."
- "You are afraid," said Damerel, smiling, that Isabel will not love me enough?"
- "No, no, no!" exclaimed Geraldine; "indeed I only fear you will think she does not! I am no judge, because when I mention you she is naturally silent; but I know she has a kindly heart—that is the word—she can feel so deeply."

 —Geraldine paused.

Damerel was silent—a shade was on his countenance—at that moment Isabel passed, and Geraldine exclaimed, in her warm way, "Dear Isabel, you are not going?"

"No, not yet," said Isabel, coldly. The contrast of the two tones was so strong, that Damerel started up, and crossed the room with a sigh.

"Isabel," whispered Geraldine, "don't be angry with me; indeed I could not help it. I told him not to stay with me, but he would. I could not get him away, though I did tell him, indeed I did!"

Isabel did not answer; she smiled, but the smile was bitter, and sad to see. Geraldine stood by her cousin, and passed her arm round her waist. She saw Damerel watching them. Isabel shrunk away!

"That girl is right," thought Damerel.

"Isabel is cold, terribly calm and cold compared to that warm affectionate young creature!"

"Well, thank goodness, that stiff, disagreeable party is over!" said Isabel, as the family of Seytons got into the carriage.

- "Did you find it so?—I didn't," said Dame-
 - " No, I daresay not," said Isabel.
- "Isabel," whispered the lover, "you told me ot to notice you. I---"
- "Oh, I wasn't thinking of that," answered Isabel. "I daresay you were better engaged. I declare I hardly observed—I——"

The glare of lamps from a passing carriage fell on Isabel's face. Damerel saw large drops hanging on her eyelashes, and in the gloom that followed he gently took her hand, "Isabel,—my own dearest."

Hastily and instantly the hand was withdrawn, and Damerel threw himself back with the inward thought, "she cannot love me!"

For some days after this there was a coldness between the two, and Damerel was too proud to yield first. Geraldine came once in the time, and was all gentle playfulness,—Isabel dignified reserve, in which it was not Damerel's nature to join. At last he summoned courage, and mastered his temper. The lovers' quarrel was made up; and once more Isabel was the happiest of the happy.

CHAPTER VII.

A MONTH sped away, and again a coolness sprang up between two who knew they lived but for each other; there was an estrangement between two hearts who loved with the deep devotedness of first, of early love. And who caused all this! Alas for the answer! it was Lady Geraldine Seyton!

With careful treachery, by every gentle fascinating art, had she wound herself round young Damerel's affections, and fairly won his transferred love. `This could be seen in his altered, embarrassed manner—in his wild sunken eye. Isabel, too, looked thin and miserable. She knew that were she only to warn Damerel of his danger, he would pause at the brink; but she could not stoop to that. She bore his altered eye—she bore his chilling words!

Mrs. Seyton gave a quadrille party one evening, and the Countess of Chester, with the Ladies Seyton, looked in, on their way to Almacks. Isabel turned towards the door, when she heard them announced, and the first thing she saw was Damerel leading forward Geraldine to join the waltzers.

"I shall ask mamma to let me stay here," said she, to her partner, "for I really am not equal to Almacks; here, I can dance only with those I like."

" Is M. d'Avignon in the room, then? did

he come with you?" said Fanny Seyton, who overheard the speech, and resented it for Isabel's sake."

"No;" said Geraldine, with a smile of perfect composure, "I never thought of bringing him:"

Then turning to Damerel, she said,

- "You don't look well, Mr. Damerel; what makes you so silent?"
- "I am ill, unhappy, or something, Lady Geraldine; and I am half inclined to come for consolation to you."
- "Don't confess—don't confess to me," shuddered Geraldine, "I have a horror of confession; but let me tell you what your illness is?"
 - " Say on, fair fortune-teller."
 - "It is here," and she touched her heart.

 Damerel nodded assent.

- " You have had a lovers' quarrel?"
- "It is not that quite; because, I cannot bring her to speak. Oh Geraldine! if she had but one spark from the fire of your heart, I could die at her feet for a smile."

This was coming so near a crisis, that even Geraldine was staggered—her eyes were suddenly opened—what was she doing? ensnaring an engaged heart! flirting to the verge of propriety with an engaged man! But to retract was too late—the deed, the heartless deed was done!

As Damerel left the ball-room, that night, a light hand touched his arm.

- "Mr. Damerel," said Isabel, gently, "are you coming to see us to-morrow?"
 - " My dearest Isabel, of course."
- "Then let it be at three o'clock, I must speak to you alone—good night.'

The next morning, Isabel went into her ther's study.

- "Papa!" she could get no farther the counded heart had no pride before him—Isabel sobbed hysterically. It was an hour before she could explain to the thunderstruck father her intentions—then she sobbed out her tale.
 - "Give up Damerel, Isabel! impossible!"
 - "My dearest father, I could never be happy with him—I mean to tell him so to-day. I have made up my mind, and no power except your command shall make me his wife."
 - "Then, Isabel, the fault is on his side—he must answer this to me—my daughter is not to be treated in this way with impunity—his visit to-day shall be to me—"
 - "Papa, if there is a fault, on any side, that fault is mine. Damerel is perfectly ignorant of

what the result of this day's visit will be; he is innocent of any blame—the blame is mine. I cannot, will not marry him; and my only request is, that directly I free him of this engagement, you will take me away—where, I care not—only take me. Some day, perhaps, you will discover, without assistance from me, the reasons of my conduct."

- "Does your mother know the toy you are making of your happiness?—does she know of this unheard-of whim?"
- "I told her this morning, and she said, she would not influence my will, to interfere with my happiness."
- "Neither then will I," said Mr. Seyton, and opening the door, he silently motioned Isabel to leave the room; she did so, and as she ascended to the drawing-room, she heard his steps pacing to and fro the study.

People can wind themselves up to anything, and Isabel felt, while waiting in expectation of Damerel's well-known knock, that if she could but get over this interview bravely, all other earthly trials would be comparatively powerless—the moment would be to her an extinction of feeling, but she was well prepared to meet it; yet still she felt the interview might terminate differently, if his contrition were great. At last, Mr. Damerel was announced.

- "Good morning," said Isabel, "what a very hot day it is!" (and her hands were like ice.)
- "The wind is rather cold, out," said Damerel, while he looked oppressed with the August sun; "I hope you are not fatigued after last night?"
- "Not at all, thank you," said Isabel; she had not closed her eyes; "I daresay you know why asked you to call at this hour?"

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- "No, indeed, I have not an idea." Damerel knew almost as well as herself.
- "It was simply to tell you, that I have taken advantage of a woman's privilege of changing her mind."
- "Isabel, for God's sake, don't joke on it!" exclaimed Damerel, starting up.
 - "Then you know what I am going to say?"
- "How can I help guessing, after your altered conduct, Isabel?"
- "Pardon me, William, the altered conduct has been your's; however, never mind that. I only wish to state, that henceforth you must not consider yourself under any engagement to me. You are now quite free, and I hope we shall both be happy in our own way."
 - In spite of her courage, the woman's heart unnerved the quivering lip—the woman's heart

That forth the prisoned tears, and Isabel turned

- "Isabel! this is not in earnest—you are not one to do this—it is to try me."
- "No," said Isabel, "I have never been more serious in my life. I would not try you, William, even if I thought any conduct of mine could. My simple will is—we part, in heart, for ever, from this day."
 - "I will not believe it," said Damerel, pacing the room, and then throwing open another window—"It cannot—it shall not be. Oh, my God! Isabel, if you would but get angry!"
 - "I cannot—it is not my nature, and since my calmness offends you now—"
 - ~ " It maddens me."
 - "What then would you feel were you bound to me for life? No-you must choose one more

suited to make you happy than myself; and remember you are not to accuse yourself for this—the whole fault is mine; but I feel I could not make you as happy some day as I hope in future to see you. I feel also my own unworthiness—I cannot be your wife."

- "Where shall I ever find your equal, dear, gentle, amiable Isabel!" said Damerel, striking his clenched hand on his brow.
- "Anywhere!" said Isabel, "there are many more worthy of you. I could not live in the consciousness that you might have chosen better. Be calm, William."
- "Calm!" cried Damerel, dashing her hand, which she had laid on his arm, away; "I cannot be calm—I will not be calm. Calm! at this moment?—when—when—Calm? Ha! ha! I like your telling me to be calm! Remember, Isabel, this is your doing?"

- "I know it; the whole blame is mine."
- " And your decision is irrevocable?"
- "Perfectly; because I am confident one will and his happiness in it."
- "We will pass by that, if you please. Are you certain no power will change it?"
 - "Certain. I am not one to change."
 - "Neither then am I one to plead!" said
 Damerel haughtily. "Isabel, good bye!"
 - "Good bye!"

Isabel held her breath till he was gone—the street door closed—she flung herself on the sofa.

"Oh William, William!" had you pleaded but in a look, I could have forgiven all!"

Damerel went home. Such is the general nature of man, that he never accuses himself of blame in an affair of the heart. Damerel rushed

angry and indignant—grieved, yet perfectly convinced he was an injured man; which conviction served in some degree to smooth his ruffled plumes, although ever and anon he had sundry most provoking stings of conscience. The next morning he was far on his way to Castle Damerel.

In the course of a week all the world of Mrs. Seyton's acquaintance knew of the news that the match between Miss Seyton and Mr. Damerel was broken off.

"Look here!" said Geraldine to her sisters, one morning, as she entered the room with the *Post* in her hand; "there's William Damerel off to the castle; didn't I tell you both he never would marry Isabel?"

"Whose fault is that?" said Laura.

- "How do I know, grave sister mine?"
- "Oh, Geraldine," said Laura; "you know well enough,—but it was not well done!"
- "The deed is done—it can't be helped—she ought to have kept him better;" said Lady Geraldine, and she left the room.

THE LADY GERALDINE.

CHAPTER VIII.

A YEAR passed, and found the Seytons in Scotland, settled for the summer; the Earl and his family were abroad again; and their only son, a houseless but voluntary wanderer, went to Scotland, on his return from Germany, to stay with his uncle. His manner was even more sad than ever, and his dress the deepest mourning. His fine but pale countenance contrasted strangely with a head of long black hair, which hung over the collar of his coat. He would wander up the mountains of Strathever with

without having once discharged its contents. He joined the family circle, and played chess with Isabel; but no smile ever moved the chiselled lip—no beam ever lightened the dark wild eye. "It was a painful thing," as the neighbours used to remark, "to see young Lord Seyton wandering about like a ghost."

"I wish he'd go home, poor dear fellow," said his uncle; "it is quite a responsibility having him here."

No one knew how his time had been spent in Germany—even Isabel did not dare to ask: she only guessed, by his dress, that Adelaide Schlaftenberg was no more. Isabel was the same gentle being as ever—perhaps a little changed; but in the wilds of Stratheven, it mattered little how she and her melancholy

cousin lived their summer days. They were constant companions in long walks, and both would often return without having exchanged a sentence; yet still each enjoyed their secret thoughts—for it is often a pleasure to have a mournful retrospect, when the present and future present nought but dull monotony.

Not so the young master of Castle Damerel! For the first three months he had shut himself up; but then solitude became irksome, and he re-entered the gay world. He stood for a borough, and Isabel read his speeches in the House. She saw in the paper frequent mention of his name: sometimes at Tattersall's there was Mr. Damerel's grey, or bay, or chesnut to be sold. Then at Almack's, Mr. Damerel's name was sure to be. At Court again—there was Mr. Damerel: and in the autumn, the

papers observed that a large and distinguished party was assembled at the magnificent seat of William Damerel, Esq. He had given a cup for the beaus, and a ball for the belles, of Northumberland: and a bitter pang shot through Isabel's heart, when she read: "The honours of the Castle were done by the beautiful Countess of Newcastle, and her fair daughters."

"Ah!" sighed Isabel; "he is happy again now—but why does he not marry? Papa was right—I have thrown my happiness away!"

To feel herself wretched, and to know he was the lively Damerel again, was a source of additional misery to poor Isabel. Until then, she had felt for him alone; but now that he needed not pity or sympathy, her heart turned to look upon its own desolation—and a dreary survey that was!

One day a paragraph in the Morning Post. appeared, which annoyed Mr. Seyton, and vexed Isabel beyond expression: though the principal person concerned was totally careless of it. It ran thus:

"A marriage is now on the 'tapis' between the young Lord Seyton, only son of the Earl of Chester, and his beautiful and accomplished cousin, Miss Seyton, eldest daughter of Herbert Seyton, Esq. of Stratheven, N.B., where his Lordship is staying previous to the ceremony."

When Damerel first heard this piece of most false intelligence, he was entertaining a large party of convivial friends at the Clarendon; and his long, low, bitter laugh, told not how it affected him. The moment after, he had filled his glass, and was drinking, with some of those near, the health of Lord Seyton and his bride. "And I wish him joy of his bargain!"

Alas! that those words should have passed his lips! But Damerel was no longer the man a twelvemonth before had seen him. He had rushed into dissipation to dispel thought; he had learned to steep grief in wine, and it was under its influence that these words were spoken.

Not that this was his practice; on the contrary, he was frequently laughed at for his temperance: but the least thing now excited him, and at these moments the spirited young man was lost in the angry, bitter, or sarcastic Damerel. He never read the papers, therefore the contradiction of the report never reached his ears; and if it had, it would have fallen unheeded.

One bitter winter's evening the family of Seyton sat round the blazing hearth, and heard the hail beating through the hills on the windows with that feeling of placid security which an English heart always carries about,—when the servant entered with letters and papers. There was a letter to Lord Seyton, which he quietly put into his pocket, although it bore the honourable frank of "Chester;" and Isabel took up the newspaper. The first marriage that presented itself to her view, was this:—

"On the 12th, at Rome, William Damerel, Esquire, of Castle Damerel, Northumberland, and Curzon Street, London, to the Lady Geraldine Seyton, the second daughter of the Earl of Chester."

Isabel was seated on a very low high-backed 'chaise de prières,' when she read this announcement, and the large sheet of the *Herald* concealed her face.

"Isabel," said Lord Seyton; "when you

have done with that paper will you give it to me?"

Isabel did not answer, and Lord Seyton walked to the back of her chair; he started, and stooped over her.

"Aunt Herbert, look at Isabel."

Mrs. Seyton and Fanny rose at the same moment.

Isabel was senseless in her chair!

CHAPTER IX.

"My dear Isabel," said Mr. Seyton to his daughter, the week before they were to leave Scotland for town; "here is another letter from General Hope, and I really must insist that when he calls to-day you see him."

- "Oh, papa."
- "My dear, remember I only ask you to see him. I do not wish to influence you in any way; and three months ago I would not even have asked you to do this, because then an object was in the way which might have sanc-

tioned your refusal of General Hope: but now that object is lost to you for ever, and since Damerel-—"

"Well, well; yes, papa, let him—let General
Hope come then. I shall be at home before his
hour. I am going up the hill with Herbert."

Isabel could never bear the mention of Danerel's name. She tried to conquer the feeling that made her shrink to breathe it, but her effort was vain. She knew that she must meet both him and his wife in their set in town, yet still she refrained from thinking of either of them; and her father was the only person who was not aware that her refusal of William Damerel proceeded from no dislike. He, therefore, mentioned him frequently, and Isabel's start he never observed. General Hope at last came to Scotland, and proposed to Isabel; and

much as she respected him, she could not accept him, and she did not like to refuse him, so she would not see him; but deputed her mother to say she was quite happy as she was, and had no wish to change.

"That is always the answer a young lady thinks it correct to give," said General Hope, laughing; "but if Miss Seyton would but suffer me to speak to her in person!"

And poor Isabel was persuaded to grant the desired interview.

Sad and silent she accompanied her cousin up the beautiful mountain which gave the name of Strathever to the mansion; and when arrived at a favourite haunt which overlooked the whole valley and its winding roads, they sat down amongst the heather. Lord Seyton sat for some time lost in thought, until at last turning

his deep mournful eyes on his cousin, he

- "Isabel, what shall I do when you are married? I, whose family care nothing for me. I who have lost all! all! Isabel, I cannot bear to see you married! You have borne with my silence—you have consoled me in my grief—you have cheered me in sadness. You have never questioned me in sorrow; and yet—oh, Isabel, you shall not marry!"
- "My dear Herbert, believe me I have not the least intention—"
- "But you have at last consented to see General Hope?"
- "I have; but is that any proof that I must be married?"
- "Yes; when that man begins to practise persuasion, I defy any girl to withstand his pleading."

- " I shall be an exception, dear Herbert."
- "Oh, Isabel, what a merry girl I remember you, 'till love's witchery came!"
 - "Oh, hush, Herbert!"
- "Well, we must all come to it. I thought I should never get over Adelaide's death, but I did, though she was my wife."
- "It must be an everlasting source of comfort to you to know she was so before you lost her," said Isabel, in a gentle whisper, for she feared her cousin in these moods; and, until this moment, she had never known that Adelaide Schlaftenberg had become Lord Seyton's wife, or that she was dead.
- "But I feel her loss here," said Seyton, pressing his hand on his heart; "and if I lose you too, I shall have no one! Isabel, I am not mad, do you think I am?" and he turned his wild eyes on his trembling cousin.

- "No," said Isabel; "I know you are not."
 There was a long, fearful pause.
- "Look," said Isabel, suddenly, for she felt her situation both dangerous and uncomfortable, there goes General Hope up to the house."
- "And he will seek you here," said Seyton;
 so I shall go up and shoot. I shall not come
 home to dinner, but call me for tea."

As Seyton had prophesied, General Hope soon found Isabel, and as he approached, she rose to meet him. As they advanced towards each other, Isabel could not help wondering how it was she felt so perfectly composed at her grave lover's approach, when she remembered the five minutes' flutter into which Damerel's knock at the door used to throw her.

"What a beautiful day," said Isabel.
General Hope laughed slightly.

- "I suppose you thought, by enjoying it alorae, to deprive me of my promised boon," said he.
- "Oh, no," said Isabel, "I have been walking with Lord Seyton; you know he is rather an invalid, and he likes me to walk with him—indeed we mutually suit each other, for we never say a word from one hour to another, and—"
- "It is not of him I would speak," interrupted General Hope, mildly; "you are aware, my dear Miss Seyton, that the future happiness of my life depends on the few moments which it is now in your power to bestow; forgive me for interrupting you, but it is no trifle to me to lose even a sentence from your lips."
- "Oh, General Hope," said Isabel, "I wish I could be what you wish, but indeed if you only knew—"

"There is one question I have not as yet asked," said the General, still as calm as if nothing were passing out of the common, "and I would not ask it save of yourself, because I hold such things sacred: are your affections engaged already?—But I beg your pardon—if they are, I withdraw my pretensions from this moment."

Isabel began to look round in despair—what could she say?—how, to a man so proud, so honourable, so pure in heart, as General Hope, could she confess her inability to forget one no longer free? She was silent, and he continued.

"If, on the contrary, they are not, you will hardly refuse to allow me to exert my powers of persuasion?"

Isabel thought of her cousin's warning, and insensibly the words burst from her lips.

"Oh, what shall I do!"

General Hope absolutely laughed.

- "Oh, don't laugh—it is quite cruel!" cried Isabel; "you don't consider—you—"
- "I would not wish to distress you, Isabel; if my presence does so, I will leave you—shall I go?"
 - "Oh no-don't go-I mean-"

The corners of the General's mouth were terribly rebellious, but he preserved his gravity; her "don't go" was, to his mind, a step gained; while Isabel thought only "the best plan is to get it all over at once." (Like a visit to Cartwright, alas!)

"We are acting in the dark," said the General, at last; "I am perfectly ignorant of three most important things,—whether your affections are engaged—whether my addressing you is

repugnant to your feelings,—and whether I am personally disagreeable to you?"

- "Impossible!" said Isabel; "that last idea could never enter your head surely. No girl could be otherwise than flattered at being thus honourably distinguished."
- "Then only the first question remains to be answered. Dearest Isabel, am I usurping another's right in asking?"
- "Alas!" said Isabel, "you do not know what you are asking!"

Isabel's hand at this moment was clasping a little ledge of rock that jutted out from the mountain. The General laid his own on it.

- "I ask this," said he, in a low voice; "and though aware of its value, I yet hope to win it."
 - "But not without the heart?"
 - "Oh, that I should strive to gain in time; vol. 1.

for, perhaps, you have not had time to feel for me, as yet, all that your upright conscience would tell you is proper. But I am not fatiguing you, am I?"

- "Oh no," said Isabel, with the very same feeling that prompted her to say "don't go."

 "But, indeed, General Hope, I fear on trial you would find me a poor companion—a spiritless——"
- "It is your composed gentleness that attracted me first. I once despised the young ladies of the present day; but I found in you a being excelling even my wishes and hopes of perfection."
 - "Ah, I wish it was so!" sighed Isabel.
 - " Why?"
- "Because I might then hope—I might, perhaps, then—"

- "Be mine, were you going to say?"
- "Oh, General Hope, I confess—I fear my own heart is your enemy; but my father's wish has been always such a will to me, that if you could be contented——"
- "I am not 'exigeant,' Isabel. I have never said, 'Je veux tout ou rien;' for I am confident I shall never meet any one to please me but yourself; therefore I am contented with your hand; firmly convinced that, if entire devotion to your every look can win your esteem—"
 - "You have that, indeed, already."
- "Isabel, believe me, if you place your happiness in my hands, I will guard it as my only treasure."
 - " I am sure of that," said Isabel.
- "Will time, if I ask you to reflect a day, a week, a month, even a year—will that come nearer to your decision?"

- I descript. said Isabel, "papa would be better pleased if I made it now. I—I—I—am most sensible of—of—I hope you will not be be becomed in the opinion you are so good as a constant of me; and if—if—I can make
- This path is very steep," said General Hope, as they wound round the mountain; "suppose you take my arm."

She placed her hand on his arm, and he received it with the slightest possible pressure. She felt she was understood, and inwardly thanked him for his considerate kindness in interrupting her agitated explanation and—acceptation!

As they came within sight of the house, General Hope said—

"I will leave you now to find your way home, and join you at dinner."

Isabel was thankful for this also, and ran home as fast as she could, when she knew the General was out of sight. Fanny met her at their room-door, and asked the result of the interview.

- "Oh, Fanny, what could the result be, when General Hope is in the case!"
 - "Then you have accepted him?"
- "Yes! heigho! He certainly is a very superior person; and as to my saying 'No,' to any thing he chooses to propose, it is out of the question; and I knew that when I refused to see him."
 - "But you like him, dear Isabel?"
 - "Yes, certainly, in a way; but it is done now. There is now only one thing on my mind."
 - " And what is that?"

"My poor, dear, dear, interesting Herbert!

—he will miss me so! I must ask the General
to let him be very much with us. You see he
will not return to his family, because of their
conduct to that poor girl Adelaide."

"You must leave him as a legacy to me," said Fanny, laughing.

Two or three young sportsmen came in to dinner that day, and Isabel could not help insensibly acknowledging how infinitely superior was the mild dignity and soldierly manner of General Hope, when compared to them.

At tea-time, Isabel went up to her cousin's room to call him to tea. He did not answer, so she opened the door softly, and entered. He was extended on his sofa, his head resting on, and his face concealed by, his arm.

"Shall I wake him?" thought Isabel; "he

is so sound asleep—and yet—Herbert," she whispered—" Herbert!" and stooped over him.
"Your tea is ready, my dear Herbert," and she knelt by him; but still he answered not.

"Are you ill, dear Herbert?—speak to me!
—pray answer!" and Isabel bent so as to see his face. There was a rich colour on his parted lips, and a hectic spot on his cheek. His beautiful, long, black eyelashes were sweeping over his eyes, but they were not completely closed. Isabel saw their full dark pupils shining through their veil. A damp, cold faintness spread over her. She pressed her hand on her heart, as if to quell its wild beating, and placed her ear close to his mouth. The icy chill of the very air around the still face sank to her soul. "Herbert!" she gasped; "Herbert! only move—

speak—if this is sleep? but no—it is too—too still."

Suddenly Isabel started up, with a shriek that echoed long and loudly through the vaulted rooms. In bending, her eye had caught sight of the clenched hand, in which was an empty bottle, labelled—Laudanum!

END OF VOL. I.

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THE M.P.'S WIFE:

AND

THE LADY GERALDINE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE LADY GERALDINE.

(CONTINUED.)

VOL. II. B

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THE LADY GERALDINE.

(CONTINUED.)

VOL. II.



THE LADY GERALDINE

CHAPTER X.

On the amber-coloured satin dormeuse of her elegant boudoir reclined, in her most elegant attitude, Lady Geraldine Damerel; and as she twined her long bright ringlets round her fingers, her husband paced the room with a darkening brow and hurried steps. On Lady Geraldine's lap lay a small note, saying—

"Mr. and Mrs. Seyton request the pleasure of Mr. and Lady Geraldine Damerel's company

at breakfast, on Tuesday the 15th inst. at twelve o'clock. Park Lane, March 6th."

- "I tell you candidly, Geraldine, you will put me in a passion soon," said the husband, in a husky voice.
- "Eh bien, mon ami! but do not ask me to get you out of it, if I have done my part in putting you into it," laughed the beauty.
- "By Jove! Geraldine, you would provoke an angel! I am sure you would!"
- "I don't see how you can be sure of that, carissimo caro, since you never saw me engaged in single combat with one; unless, indeed—oh Gran Dio!—you surely don't mean to call yourself an angel!—Ha! ha! ha! ha!"
- "No; nor do I pretend to possess the patience of Job," said Damerel, colouring angrily.
 - "Job lived before my time, alas," said his

young wife, meekly; "and before your's, I'm certain!"

- "Geraldine, I will not have these answers.

 Am I to be obeyed or not?"
- "Oh, my dear William, you forget half of the sentence; you missed—'I thank you to tell me candidly.'"
 - "Lady Geraldine, answer me if you please."
- "Nay, I wish to please you, not myself. You told me a moment ago you would not have these answers, so what am I to do?"

Geraldine burst into tears.

"Geraldine, my love! my own sweet love!" said poor Damerel, clasping his beautiful but provoking tormentor in his arms, and kissing away the April shower; "forgive me! Indeed I was not in earnest. I beg you a thousand, thousand pardons!"

- "That's always the way!" pouted Geraldine.
 "You treat me cruelly, and then beg my pardon!"
- "Treat you cruelly?" cried Damerel. "Good Heavens, Geraldine! when I love you better than words can tell!—when I love even your little tempers!"
- "No; if you loved me you would not think I had any tempers. I daresay now you are so jealous of General Hope, that you won't let me go to the breakfast."
- "My dearest love, I wonder you wish it, after the late awful event in your family."
- "Poor Herbert, ah! but that was three months ago. No, I will not go, because you desire me not; but I know the reason—you dare not meet Isabel—that's the truth. You feel you—you—you—'

THE LADY GERALDINE.

"Forbear, Geraldine," said Damerel, hoarsely; "do not give utterance to so cruel and ungenerous a sentiment. Your heart should be too fresh and pure to harbour the thought which you were on the point of expressing. Had it found utterance—"

He turned and walked to the window.

- "You are angry," murmured Geraldine.
- "No-not angry with you," replied her husband.

She rose from her position, and followed him to the window. She threw her arms round him, and turned her beautiful face up to his; but his eyes were averted.

- "No, Geraldine; you have wounded me beyond expression. I cannot look at you."
- "Whose fault is it?" laughed Geraldine.
 "Who spoils me, and makes me his idol upon

earth, and then wonders I am not all perfection?"

"You are right," replied Damerel; "it is almost a pity, Geraldine, that you know how dear you are to me. I must learn to love you less fervently, to worship you less devoutly, and then, perhaps, you will care more for me."

"We'll see when the time comes," laughed her young ladyship. "Don't kill me with kindness. Stop, dear William, may I go to this breakfast?"

- " Why-if-you-like."
- "Will you go with me, caro sposo?"
- " Why-if-you-wish me!"

Lady Geraldine burst into a hearty fit of merrjment when her husband left her, and exclaimed,— "Well done for myself!—don't I manage him!"

And she did indeed manage him. She had wound herself round his susceptible heart in such a manner, that his almost idolatry exceeded her most extravagant expectations. They had been married now nearly a year, and she had by turns teazed, coaxed, annoyed, and gratified him during that time to such a degree, that she could rule him with a thread.

Damerel had not seen one of the Seytons since his last interview with Isabel, and the consequent recollection was any thing but pleasing; therefore, when invited to the breakfast, which would be on her wedding-day, he felt the meeting would be awkward, since he had heard, that even now she could not quietly hear the mention of his name, whilst he felt and knew he could meet her with perfect tranquillity. It was for this reason—it was to spare Isabel—that he tried

to dissuade Lady Geraldine from going; but no —go she would; and soon after her husband left her, she ordered her carriage, to pay a congratulatory visit to her aunt.

The Damerels lived in Carlton Gardens—the Seytons still in Park Lane; and as Geraldine drove up Regent Street in her open carriage, she met her husband.

- "Will you come in, William?" said she; but he hesitated, and then again wavered.
- "Be quick and decide," said Geraldine, impatietly. "I'm going to the Seytons."
- "No," said Damerel, "I'm homeward bound;" and he turned and walked away.

Mrs. Seyton was at home, and by her side, when Geraldine entered, sat Isabel—not the Isabel her cousin had last seen her; but a pale thin girl, whose large dark eyes seemed swim-

ming in tears—whose wan cheerless look betokened anything but the happy bride. The contrast between the cousins was so strong, that even Geraldine tamed down her wild gaiety, as if it would almost be profane to disturb the deep and sad repose of Isabel's manner. She felt herself in full and brilliant beauty, and she saw Isabel a faded flower, and who had caused the change?—alas!——

- "My dear aunt," said Geraldine, suddenly, "we only arrived in England the day before yesterday, or I should have been here, you may depend upon it, long ago. I came to say we shall be most happy to attend dear Isabel's wedding next week."
 - "How is Mr. Damerel?" said Mrs. Seyton.
- "Quite well, thank you: my dear Isabel, have you fixed on your dress for the day?"

- "Oh yes," replied Isabel, "I believe it is made—I have not seen it, though."
 - "What is it? do tell me!"
- "Really," said Isabel, colouring, "I don't know, for mamma and Maradan have the whole charge of the trousseau—it is all come."
- "Oh let me see it!" cried Geraldine, "don't ring, I can come up to your room;" and throwing off her shawl and bonnet, with its beautiful pleureuse of white feathers, she flew lightly up-stairs before Isabel, who followed slowly—the trousseau was very elegant, and on the dressing-table were two or three sets of jewels.
- "Diamonds! what loves!" said Geraldine, opening a case, "who gave you these?"
 - "That was General Hope's last present."
 - " And these torquoises?"
 - " Mamma's gift."

- " And this lovely little watch?"
- "General Hope, again."
- "Happy girl you are to get these lovely things," said Geraldine, thoughtlessly, "I wish I was going to be goodness! I forgot I had a husband, already. My dear girl, is the General very tender?"
- "No, it is not his way, but he is very kind," said Isabel.
- "Ah! but does he call you all manner of names?"
 - "What do you mean?" said Isabel, smiling.
- "Oh I mean, does he say, my dearest, and all that sort of thing?"
- "No-he simply says, Isabel;" said the fiancée, with a deep long whispering sigh.
- "Dear me!" said the giddy wife, "you will find you won't be simple Isabel long—you ought

to hear William! good gracious! it is most amusing to hear his catalogue of terms of adoration and admiration, after he has put me into a passion, and wants to make it up."

- "I dare say your catalogue is just as warm to him," said Isabel, with a slight twinge at her heart, and another smothered sigh.
- "Mine! oh no! you know our match was not a love—who's that calling?"
- "Mamma, I dare say—come down," said Isabel; and she ran down stairs, with that dreadful chill at her heart, which she had felt when she heard of Geraldine's marriage—to think that that enviable girl had won the greatest happiness that earth could give, and yet almost confess, that love was not the power that spurred her to the contest.

Isabel opened the drawing-room door, and

Geraldine entered before her, which prevented her seeing the people in the room, until her back was towards the light. Fortunate indeed that it was so — a gentleman in the room advanced towards her, and with offered hand, said, "How do you do, Miss Seyton?"

Isabel looked up—she did not start nor speak; but sank very suddenly on the sofa, deadly pale; her bow, however, was apparently composed, though her hand was cold as death; the hand that met hers, was warm and unrestrained.

It was William Damerel. General Hope stood talking to Geraldine, on the other side of the room. Mrs. Seyton was with a lady in the next room, and Isabel felt she must speak.

"You have been sometime abroad," was all she ventured.

"Yes," said the frank free happy voice of other days, "I think it is about a year and a half, since we had the pleasure of meeting."

Isabel shuddered—could he call their last meeting a pleasure?—she thought not of its being a customary phrase.

- "How do you think Geraldine looks?" was his next attempt. Isabel glanced at her cousin. She was laughing evidently at General Hope; her beautiful eyes were flashing with delight, and her small brilliant teeth exhibited in all their perfection.
- "Beautiful creature!" murmured Isabel, "I never saw anything so lovely!"
- "William," said Geraldine, starting up, "I shall take you home with me, mon ami,—here, Isabel, I have given, General Hope such a scolding for his gravity! William, please to put on my shawl?"

"Are you warm enough, my dearest?—this shawl is very thin, Geraldine, my love," said Damerel, in a low voice. Low as was the tone, Isabel caught the whispered words of endearment—she saw the beaming look of fondness, with which Damerel gazed on every movement of his graceful wife; and as they drove away, her bursting heart breathed forth:

"Thank God! he is happy!" and she? * *

CHAPTER XI.

Lady Geraldine was dressing for the wedding, and Damerel sat by the mirror before which she stood. He was always present at the close of her toilette.

- "Isabel's wedding-day!" said she, "do you know, William, I always thought she would be an old maid, didn't you?"
- "'Pon my word, Geraldine, I I never thought on the subject—your ringlets are very long to-day, my love."
- "Are they? oh no—that's your bad taste, my dearest, I assure you it is."

- "The taste is yours, my love—I admire them beyond expression."
- "Now, I dare say, William," said Geraldine, suddenly pausing as she raised her beautiful hat to her head, "I dare say you like Isabel's plain hair better than my curls—eh?"
- "It is most amazing to me, my dear, what amusement you find in constantly coupling my name with that of your cousin—upon my honour I'm delighted General Hope will be the means of sparing me any future allusions, for I do not like it."
- "I begin to be afraid, William, that you have taken a dislike to me;" said Geraldine, with the utmost coolness.
- "I wish, Geraldine, you would not entertain such absurd fears, then;" said her husband.
 - "And now you have made me tear my white

gloves, and I declare I have not another pair in the house, for I have spoilt four pair this morning!"

- "We shall be late, my love—send out quickly for more;" said Damerel, impatiently.
- "No, my dear William, no one knows my size; do you think you could take the carriage up to Howell and James's?"
- "To be sure—instantly;" and Damerel flew down stairs. Hardly was he at the bottom than Geraldine sent her maid after him. She had found more gloves.
- "I wish, my dearest," said he, as he seated himself by her side; "that you would not do these things. You know I would do anything in the world for you, but I cannot be made the laughing-stock of your Adèle."
- "Then next time don't do what I ask you;" said Geraldine.

"It's very well to say that;" laughed her husband; "not quite so easy to obey!"

When "Mr. and Lady Geraldine Damerel" were announced, there was a general stir. The bride had not come from church, yet the room was full of expecting guests. A murmur of admiration went round as the beauty advanced.

It is astonishing what a sensation the most elegant or the most beautiful in a large family causes amongst her companions and relations. Geraldine was instantly surrounded; her husband was admired so much by his sisters-in-law that he was soon out of sight; but the young wife stood "proudly pre-eminent," in all the conscious freedom of a young married woman. Suddenly the door flew open, and General Hope entered—his bride on his arm. Geraldine's quick eye saw in a moment the agony of

her feelings. The long Brussels veil from the small stately head of Isabel, looked like a shroud to the still colourless face beneath; yet she had never looked more interesting. As the congratulations were ringing round, Isabel suddenly threw a glance round the room, and then the crimson blood tinged hands, throat, cheek, and brow. One only knew what that look said. One knew what that deep and painful blush said, yet he could not feel it as she did. She had breathed in spirit with that look the last thought for him. It was the last weak feeling that prompted it; and some eyes may wander on these pages, whose owners may in secret have breathed as did, at that moment, the bride—" Lost, doubly lost, for ever!"

There were no tears from Isabel during the breakfast; she sat amongst the guests, silent

Lady Geraldine; and behind her chair, occupied in answering her numerous wishes, and watching her every look, was her husband. Isabel saw all. General Hope was walking about the room, when suddenly he also went to the back of Geraldine's chair. She made him stoop down, to whisper what she called a secret.

"My dear General, tell your bride to let us see if that pretty mouth can smile. Really it is quite dreadful to see her so affected; because a wedding is nothing, after all."

General Hope tried to laugh, but he could not hide entirely the annoyance he felt. And a few moments afterwards he went round, and whispered:—

"Look happier, I entreat, Isabel; they are remarking you. For my sake consider appearances. This is hardly kind."

Isabel rose instantly, and went to the window. Her husband spoke in those words, and they sounded cold and harsh beside the gay tenderness of Damerel's manner to his wife. It is bad enough to be unhappy, but it is infinitely worse to have no one to lay the blame on.

"It's my own fault," was the constant thought uppermost in Isabel's mind; and there was no alternative but to submit. The carriage came—the four horses pawed the ground. Isabel saw by General Hope's countenance that he was impatient to be off, and she made her adieux as fast as ever she could. When it came to Damerel's turn, he laughed, and said, "Goodbye, Mrs. Hope." Isabel had not heard her new name before; and she felt directly that she liked to hear it better far from his lips, than the "Miss Seyton" by which he had once wooed

"My dear Isabel," said General Hope to his bride, some weeks after their marriage; "where would you like to spend the Easter recess? here are no less than six invites for us."

- "Your sister has asked us, has she not?"
- "Yes; but you would not like a family party,
 I think!"
 - "Oh no-I have no choice, -just as you like."
 - "No, my dear Isabel, I leave it to you."
- "Well, I have heard that Elm Hall, Lord Elms's, is a delightful place."
- "The Countess visits Lady Manners, the 'divorcée,' and she might be there; what say you to accepting Lady Helen Vernon's invitation? Vernon was an old schoolfellow of mine.

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She is a 'bas bleu,' but a delightful woman; and her company is always select."

"Certainly, if you wish it. I will write, shall I?"

"Do; and let me entreat you, Isabel, not to obey me so very strictly. You really seem to consider me in the light of a tyrant."

"Surely, General Hope, you would not wish me to disobey you in anything? You must know I have no will but your's. What you like, is always my taste too; it is my pleasure to obey you, and I do it without thinking."

"The world will say you are afraid of me," said the General; "there is a medium in all things!" and he left the room.

"I'm sure," thought poor Mrs. Hope, "the world would say quite true, for a wonder, if it did say so!"

Isabel was afraid of her husband. She had been petted at home, and his composed yet stern manner frightened her. She had rarely heard herself addressed at home as anything but "dearest," and his "my dear," sounded cold. He watched her, too, with unceasing attention—he noticed her dress—he directed her toilet—he took his whole establishment into his own hands; and although Isabel had not a wish ungratified, still she felt herself nothing and nobody in her own house.

"We shall see how he behaves in company," said she to herself, as they flew along the road towards Mr. Vernon's seat; and she composed herself in the corner of her carriage tranquilly and contentedly.

"What are you going to wear at the dinner, to-day, my dear?" said the General at last.

- "It depends on what company they have;" said Isabel.
- "Their house is always full, my dear. I like you best in white, you know."
 - "Very well; then I'll wear my white satin."
- "No, my dear, it is too full dress for the first dinner. What do you call that thin thing you wore at our wedding?"
 - "That was Brussels net; -no, lace."
 - "I like that best.
 - "Very well; I'll wear it with pleasure."
- "And remember, my dear, I shall not notice you all this evening."
 - "Very well—thank you;" said Isabel.

The General looked at her and laughed.

- "Oh!" said Isabel, colouring crimson; "I
 - "Never mind, my dearest;" said her husband,

again laughing slightly; and the "dearest" was a term that warmed her into life again.

They arrived late, and dinner was just announced; so Isabel had no time to look at the numerous guests. But no sooner was she seated at table than she met the opposite glance of the smiling Geraldine; next to her Adolphe d'Avignon; and further down, on the same side, Damerel himself! Isabel's next neighbour addressed her; she turned, and instantly recognized poor Herbert's friend, the shy, gifted, and accomplished Guido di Sorrento!

CHAPTER XII.

"ISABEL, 'ma douce amie,' "whispered Lady Geraldine to Mrs. Hope, as the ladies were preparing to retire for the night, "I have not been near you all the evening; come to my room and have an hour's confab—why do you hesitate?"

- " "General Hope-"
- "Oh, nonsense, never mind him; I'll manage your dear old husband for you—come."
- "I daresay Mr. Damerel is as particular as my husband," said Isabel, very much annoyed

at the term "dear old." Geraldine, however, overruled her scruples, and dragged her along the passages, till she fairly enticed her into her room, and buried her in a chair.

- "There!" said she; "now, Isabel, I have so much to ask and to tell; first, how do you like your dear old general—nay, my dear, you know I don't mean anything, it's only my way; I caught it from William; he always says the old General—so do I. I like him so much, don't you?"
 - "He is my husband," said Isabel, proudly.
- "Ah, 'carissima,' it doesn't follow that you must like him; but tell me, how came you here?"
- "I never was so thunderstruck as when I saw you, Geraldine."
 - "Well, my dear, only think, it has been

surprise to all of us; only think, when we arrived yesterday, the first person I looked at was Adolphe!—poor, poor Adolphe d'Avignon, whom I have not seen since—since—since, you know, our ball."

- "I am sorry he is here," said Isabel, "for all dinner time it was fortunate your husband was on the same side as yourself."
- "' Mon Dieu!' Isabel, what old-fashioned ideas of propriety you have!—what could I do?—the moment we met he was at my feet."
- "Geraldine, don't say so—oh, it could not be; you would not have suffered it."
- "'Dieu!' how strange you are !-don't take me 'au pied de la lettre;' I only mean in a figurative sense of course."
 - " Take care, Geraldine, pray do."
 - "Of what, my dear? Ah, Isabel, don't

frighten yourself about me—apropos, how do you think Damerel looks?"

- " Very well-at least-"
- "And your good quiet dear old—I beg your pardon—your nice husband, Isabel; you are not afraid of him, are you?"
 - " I !" said Isabel.
- "I only asked; don't look so indignant—come in," cried Geraldine to a faint knock at the door.
 - " Who's that," said Isabel, rising.
 - "Only Adèle, my maid, I suppose --come in."

Isabel was in a chair behind the large tapestried door, and she never looked up till Geraldine burst into a fit of laughter, and a voice said: "Geraldine, for shame!"

Isabel sprang up; before her, in a rich crimson brocaded dressing-gown, his taper in his hand, stood William Damerel, the picture of vexation, anger, frowns, and astonishment. Isabel flew towards the door, rushed into the dark passage, and ran along until an arm stayed her—it was her husband's.

- " Mrs. Hope!"
- "Hugh, my dear Hugh!—oh, how glad I am!" and Isabel fairly threw herself into his arms; it was the first time in her life that she had ever called him "Hugh."
- "Come into your room, my dear; what has alarmed you?"
- "Geraldine has played me such a trick!—what a mercy I met you!" panted Isabel.
- "Tell me quietly," said General Hope, in that mild manner which always soothed Isabel; "don't be foolish."
- "You will think me so, indeed, when you know the truth, but really General Hope-"

- "Never mind General Hope; speak to Hugh," said her husband. That speech won its way to Isabel's heart instantly.
- "Well, my dear Hugh, I was sitting talking to Geraldine, when there was a knock at the door, and she said it was only her maid, so I did not move; but no sooner was the door closed, than I heard an exclamation, and looking up, I saw Mr. Damerel! I was so sorry, but I could not help it—indeed, what could I do but run? Thank Heaven I met you; I hope, General Hope, you are not angry? Geraldine did it on purpose."
- "Not I, my Isabel! thank you for this plain candour; your cousin with her frivolity is unpardonable. No doubt she will make some story of this; but thank you, my dearest, for telling me all yourself."

The next morning Isabel went into the breakfast room on her husband's arm, and found the party just seating themselves at table.

- "My dear Mrs. Hope," said Lady Helen Vernon, after Isabel had made excuses for being late, "I hope your headache is better; you look pale?"
- "Does she look pale?" said Lady Geraldine, leaning forward; "oh, yes, so I see; but I fear it was the fright last night, eh, Isabel?"
 - "What fright?" said Lady Helen, anxiously.
- "Oh!" exclaimed Geraldine, "she met the Spirit of Norman Abbey attired in red and—"
- "Lady Geraldine," said General Hope, "did you not promise to let me drive you out to-day in my pony phaeton?"
- "Alas, alas, my dear General, Adolphe engaged me full an hour ago."

- "Pardon me," said Guido di Sorrento, "your Ladyship once made me flatter myself that—"
- "Oh, Marchese, I was laughing. Adolphe, is your tandem here?"
 - " 'A votre service,' " smiled d'Avignon.
- "Geraldine," said Damerel from the opposite side of the table, "you never can think of mounting that tandem."
 - "But I do; I am going in it certainly."
- "It is too dangerous, it must not be!" said the husband, warmly.
- "Hold your tongue, my own dear creature," was the wife's reply. Damerel looked at Isabel; their eyes met, and both coloured crimson.
- "Heyday!" said Geraldine, as they rose from table, and she placed one arm in that of Isabel's, "have you, too, caught the tint of the brocade of last night?"

Isabel simply looked grave.

- "Isabel," continued her Ladyship, "did you get a curtain lecture?—nay, I'm sure you did—what fun!—what did the dear old—I mean what did he say?—ha, ha, ha!—don't deny it, I'm convinced he gave you one! How I should have laughed. Does the General look as well in uniform as William does in red? Ha, ha, ha! Oh, I shall die!"
- "Geraldine," said Isabel warmly, "this_is beyond a joke; I must beg and desire—"
- "William," cried Geraldine, as her husband passed the window in which the cousins stood, "do come here, and save me from a lecture; Isabel is scolding me: you never scold me, do you, my own?" and she flung her arms round his neck. Isabel could not stand it; she walked away, and stood at an open window, where the

light air fanned her brow and cooled her burning cheek. All the breakfast party had dispersed, when suddenly an arrival caused no
small sensation in the portico of the mansion,
and Geraldine instantly exclaimed—

"Good Heavens! what a handsome man!—far handsomer than Adolphe even!"

Isabel was unobserved, and she heard the matrimonial dialogue that followed this exclamation, without liking to move.

- "Oblige me for once, my own Geraldine; excuse yourself to d'Avignon; in this house, where your actions and words ever are remarked, pray shun so great an 'exposé.'"
- "My dear William, think how well I shall look at the top of the tandem!—I wonder who that handsome man was, eh?"
- "You look much better in a carriage, my love."

- "Oh, no, William, I can't be locked up with all the tabbies—there comes that handsome man."
- "I would go in any carriage you like with you."
- "Thank you, 'mon ami,' but I cannot disappoint or offend Adolphe."
 - " And you do not care for offending me?"
 - " Is such a thing possible?"
 - "Geraldine, for once oblige me."
 - "William, for once humour me."

At this moment Lady Helen Vernon entered, dressed for the riding party, with the handsome man noticed by Geraldine. Isabel took this opportunity of trying to escape, but Lady Helen stopped her by saying—

"My dear Mrs. Hope, I was looking for you: allow me to introduce my nephew, Lord

Cecil Vernon—my husband's nephew—a companion in arms of your husband's."

"Not unknown to me in name or fame," said Isabel, smiling. "General Hope will be agreeably surprised, I am sure, to find your Lordship here."

Geraldine at this moment came forward, and made some remark to Lady Helen, who said hastily:

"As Cecil is to be of our party to these rocks, let me introduce him to you."

Lord Cecil turned as quickly as his languid elegance would permit him, and absolutely recoiled when the beauty said: "Not now—I'm in such a hurry—any time will do, won't it?" and ran away.

Damerel was also leaving the room, and coloured up to his forehead at the speech. Isabel

was going to dress; and as she passed him, he suddenly stopped her.

- "Mrs. Hope—Isabel!"
- " Yes?"
- "May I speak to you alone one instant?
 You are the only person I can ask to do me the greatest favour—may I?"
- "I shall be most happy to do anything in my power," said Isabel, trying to check the deep and painful blush which the consciousness of being alone for the first time with William Damerel brought into her cheek. He was agitated, but evidently not on that account.
- "It is very kind of you—it is of my thoughtless, giddy wife I would speak. You must be aware, that at this time my whole soul is wrapt up in the care she takes of herself; and yet, notwithstanding the youth of the driver to

whom she trusts herself, the character of his fiery horses—her own thoughtlessness, and my agonizing anxiety, she persists in mounting that tandem!"

He paused.—Isabel thought within herself,
"Ah! how lightly is such love repaid." Damerel continued:

- "Isabel, if you would but entreat her not!"
- "Have you not done so?"
- "But, alas! in vain. She knows her power with me—she knows I have no heart to argue with her. But you—"
 - "What shall I say?"
- "Represent, in the first place, the danger, and then the exhibition. She is too young—far too beautiful. Oh! Mrs. Hope, if you would but guide—advise."
- "I will speak to Geraldine," said Isabel; and she moved towards the door.

"Perhaps," hesitated Damerel, holding the handle in his hand, "it would be as well not to mention to Geraldine that I have spoken to you?"

Isabel promised to take the whole responsibility on herself; and hastened to Geraldine's room. She found her in an extacy of delight at a new hat. All Isabel's entreaties were lost and wasted on her; so she tried the last resource.

- "My dear Geraldine, do you not see that by disobeying your husband's wish, you encourage and flatter M. d'Avignon?"
 - "Qu'est-ce que cela fait?"
- "Alas! do you not also see that he wants no encouragement?"
 - "Then, my dear, he will not take it."
- "Oh, Geraldine, be warned! You must know that you are not one to trifle with that

man. Were you less formed to—to—fascinate—less (for you must see that)—less beautiful—you might venture on the ground you are now treading: but as it is—"

"I do not understand you," said Lady Geraldine, colouring to the tips of her fingers, and throwing her ringlets over her face.

"Then do not be angry, if I explain. Tell me, Geraldine, if M. d'Avignon's conduct is at all altered since your marriage?"

"No—he—of course not—I am glad to say it is not, for it gives me consequence to have him in my train.—Isn't this a most divine feather, Isabel?"

"You are going too far—you will bring him on till you will repent. For God's sake, Geraldine, think less of your hat, and more of your husband's wishes!"

"Really," said Geraldine, "you do take a most extraordinary interest in my husband. Pray remember, Mrs. Hope, that M. d'Avignon has known me from a child, and loves me as a brother: he no more dare encroach on Lady Geraldine Damerel's favour, than you dare tell Damerel you care for him still!—Silence, Mrs. Hope!—You never saw me angry before. You have presumed too far on my husband's authority: attempt no apology—I am too deep for you!"

Geraldine panted—gave one sob, and burst into a torrent of tears. Isabel stood the picture of indignation and grief;—suddenly she threw herself by her cousin's side:

"Geraldine!" said she, in a low whisper,
"if you have feeling yet in your heart, unsay
those words!—Unsay, 'you care for him still.'

When did I ever, in look, word or act, give you reason to taunt me—torture me thus?

Unsay the words, if you have a heart; or promise they never pass your lips again!"

- "On one condition," said Geraldine, starting up; "that they are true, your countenance now tells me—I would not wish you to deny it."
- "I do deny it!" cried Isabel, haughtily.

 "Lady Geraldine, I solemnly deny loving one
 man when I am the wife of another!"
- "Then, I trust," replied Geraldine, again colouring crimson, "that the recording angel will drop a tear upon those words, for they are not true!"
- "Does my conduct to General Hope confirm you in this assertion?" said Isabel.
- "You do not love him as you ought!" said Geraldine, with the humour of a spoilt child.

"I honour, esteem, and respect my husband;" said Isabel, calmly. "I believe and know him to be superior to every other man whom I ever saw. I am proud of the name of his wife!"

"This is prevarication!" exclaimed Geraldine; "it does not convince me at all. It is not enough to honour, esteem, respect, believe in the superiority and be proud of your husband (only look at this feather!) you ought to love him, Isabel, from the very——"

"Stop, stop, Geraldine. I never meant this serious conversation to end in a joke, and only to be turned into ridicule by you; for that last sentence of your's is really—however, never mind. Dear Geraldine, look out of this window! look at your husband's eyes turned so anxiously this way! Is it right thus to repay such devotion?"

"You'll never be ready, Isabel. There! did you hear the General calling you? Run, my good cousin, run!—you'll get a scolding!"

Isabel prepared for equestrian exercise as quickly as possible. She went down, and was assisted on her horse by Lord Cecil; but no sooner did Geraldine in all her delicate beauty appear, than he turned and hastily inquired who she was.

- "Lady Geraldine Damerel;" said Isabel.
- "Geraldine—Geraldine," mused his lordship; "it is no common name. I heard it once
 in Paris; it then belonged to a very lovely
 childish creature who took principal part in a
 most imposing ceremony—but this cannot be
 her."
- "This is my cousin," said Isabel; "one of Lord Chester's daughters."

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- "Then who—is his family name Damerel?"
- "Oh no; that gentleman riding by the tandem is Mr. Damerel—Lady Geraldine's husband. They have been married about a year."
- "Is it possible! I begin to understand. Is, or rather was, your cousin a Seyton?"
- "Yes; we were all Seytons before my uncle's accession to the peerage."
- "Then that was Geraldine Seyton? I know her well. How came the match between her and Adolphe d'Avignon to be off?"
- "There never was any settled engagement between them that I know of," said Isabel.
- "Indeed! I remember, in Paris, Madame d'Avignon always used to designate Miss Geraldine Seyton as 'la fiancée d'Adolphe;' and I always thought that for that reason they did away with the scruples with regard to a difference of religion."

"That is a serious scruple," said Isabel;
"my uncle would never have overlooked it.
He likes husband and wife to be of the same."

"Humph!" said Lord Cecil, smiling. Isabel looked rather astonished; but, not comprehending the smile, she was silent. On the arrival of the party at the rocks, the first thing Lord Cecil did, was to slide up to Geraldine, who sat in the wildest spirits on a rustic bench, and speak to His conference was very short—a few minutes, and he made his bow and retired again. Isabel happened to be speaking to Damerel, with her face towards his wife at the time, and she saw the colour fade from lip and cheek—the quivering agony of Geraldine's hasty reply to his speech—the dim shadow cross the brilliant eye-the damp faintness that overspread the altered countenance. Isabel saw

d'Avignon, who was standing near, look at Lord Cecil, and turn crimson, and then again ashy pale.

"Good heavens!" said Isabel; "look, Mr.

Damerel—do look at Geraldine!"

Damerel turned quickly, and started forward. Geraldine was not fainting, but her two little cold trembling hands were holding the long bright hair back from her forehead, and she answered to Damerel's eager questions, the simple word, in a low tone of suffocation, "Water!"

In a short time she recovered herself, but her spirits were gone, She attributed it to the heat of the weather, and after some time rallied. The carriages were all ready, and the party started. Geraldine insisted still on being in the tandem.

- "Adolphe," said she, as soon as they were seated; "something must be done. I am discovered—a word, and I am wretched for ever!"
 "What has happened!" said d'Avignon.
- "You remember the day," murmured the agitated young wife, "when I, at the earnest persuasion of your mother, consented to—to—forget the religion of my country, and——"
- "And take that of your heart;" whispered d'Avignon.
- "When I became a Roman Catholic!" cried Geraldine, wildly. "Adolphe! I am deceiving William, and enraging—and making an enemy of—of—Guido! But it is not that,—my secret is discovered! That Englishman who witnessed the ceremony—whom we never observed until the last—has recognized me. It was Lord Cecil Vernon! Adolphe! Adolphe! what would

my poor husband say if he knew we were going two ways to heaven?"

"'Grand Dieu!' what an idea," laughed the Frenchman; "as if heaven had two roads!"

Geraldine shuddered — a cold shiver ran through her. On flew the wild horses of the tandem, and Lady Geraldine Damerel spoke no more during the drive.

CHAPTER XIII.

- "ISABEL, I am going to ask you a favour," said General Hope to his wife in the evening, as he sat by the mirror at which she was dressing. "I am afraid you will find it difficult to comply, yet I trust to your endeavours."
 - "What is the favour?"
- "In other eyes, perhaps, a favour too trifling to be asked; but in mine one of importance."
- "Then, of course, I shall find it so also," said Isabel.
 - " I am not so sure of that. However, I was

going to say, Lady Helen is very fond of getting up quadrilles in the evening, may I beg that you, my dear Isabel, will not join in them?"

- "Not dance!" exclaimed Isabel, turning towards her husband with the greatest astonishment. "Do you wish me not to dance, General Hope?"
- "It is my earnest wish. There is something derogatory to my feelings in the idea of my wife's dancing. I make a favour of your obliging me in this respect."
- "But really, General Hope, it will look so odd, when I am almost the youngest in this house, for me to decline dancing!"
- "You are a married woman, and, moreover, you are my wife. As the first, it is not incumbent on you to play the part of a girl; as the second, you are bound to study my will, and I expect obedience to it."

- " For will, read whim," said Isabel.
- "My wills, wishes, and whims, have alike been indisputable as yet," said the General, colouring slightly.
- "I am sure they will want me to dance," said poor Isabel, sighing.
 - " Of course they will; but I wish you not."
- "How can I tell them that, General Hope, without getting myself laughed at by---all?"
- "For all, read Geraldine," retorted the General; "and notwithstanding the dreadful prospect of her ladyship's ridicule, my request remains unchanged."
- " It's so very odd of you," murmured Isabel, and a tear trembled in her eyes.
- " In some things I like singularity. I require your word, Isabel, your simple word, and I am

satisfied. I am sorry you require so much persuasion to oblige me."

"Nay, you can hardly complain," said Isabel, tremblingly; "for you know your requests are commands that I dare not disobey in the end, though I may hesitate at first; whilst I may sue in vain for any favour, however small!"

"You are unjust," said the General. "I simply ask you not to dance this evening. I wish to have no hesitation—no dispute; merely reply to my request."

Isabel dropt her head between her hands, and burst into a passion of tears. General Hope walked to the window, coolly and calmly, and waited till the first burst of sobs had subsided. He did not attempt to soothe her; but, finding her tears still flowing in bitterness, he walked into the boudoir adjoining, and, opening the

window, stood on the verandah. Isabel heard his voice speaking to some one below, and she listened.

- "Beautiful evening," said a voice she knew too well.
 - "Very fine," said the General, "but warm."
- "Yes—quite oppressive. Geraldine is rather knocked up,—I've just left her asleep, I'm glad to say, till dinner. I hope Mrs. Hope isn't very tired?"
- "No, thank you—she's not easily fatigued;"
 and the General re-entered the room, and closed
 the window. As he approached Isabel, she
 again burst into a paroxysm of sobs—not because
 she might not dance!

Her husband walked to the table silently—poured out a glass of water—" Isabel, drink this."

She waved it away. He stood still for a moment, and then stooping, touched her burning forehead with his lips, and gently passed his arm round her waist. This only made matters worse, for Isabel shrank away with another flood of tears, and threw herself on a sofa.

"Isabel, what have I said to cause this?" said the husband. "This is not like you, my dearest. Command—compose yourself—be rational at least."

"It is all very well to—to—say that—to—to—to—me," said Isabel; "but I cannot help it. You—you—must let me cry—or—or I shall not be able to—to—appear. Leave me for a little while. I am very sorry if you are angry. I promise you I will not dance if—if—you don't like it."

"Dry your tears, Isabel. I may have been

harsh; but it was in the performance of what I thought right. Do not answer so humbly, for I even prefer reproaches."

- "And those you will never hear from me, General Hope; for, of course, you have a right to say what you like, only—only——"
 - "Only what, dearest?"
- "Only it is hard to bear at first. By and bye I shall get accustomed——"

She paused, and General Hope stood mute with vexation! So his wife evidently expected this was only the commencement of a series of hostilities? His gentle, amiable, elegant Isabel, with her winning and ever-ready obedience, was trying to endure her life with him, when he knew full well that her very consent to become his, had been an awful sacrifice in many respects. And there she sat before him weeping!

and he, by far too proud to show how devotedly he loved her,—how bitterly he felt her every tear!

"Who shall yield?" said his heart, as he watched her flinging away the tears from her fingers like rain-drops. His pride whispered the next moment, "the weaker vessel;" and he prepared to leave the room for fear of being overpowered.

No sooner was he gone, than Isabel began to wish him back. She was frightened to think she had offended him; and though she would not have hesitated a moment to make an apology, if she saw he wished it, yet she dreaded the moment when she must meet him,—when she must face—

"The stern defiance of his altered eye."

She walked to the mirror, and finished her toilet

herself, then bathed her eyes, though the crimson circles looked very suspicious; and then again the sense of her conduct overpowered her. She was too gentle to think the General meant to wound her—no; she felt (as usual), "It's my own fault," and then again came another torrent of tears. She thought of her kind and tender father—her idolizing mother—her fond and proud sister—where were they? She felt dreadfully desolate.

The dinner-bell rang, and she started up. Her heart beat wildly, for the General had left her to enter the room, full of company, alone!—she, who trembled still so much as hardly to be able to stand. "It must be done," was the thought that nerved her, and she walked firmly down the well-staircase; but hearing footsteps before her, she looked over the banisters, and saw

Geraldine hopping playfully down, with her beautiful white arms clasped round her husband's neck, who was bending nearly double, and entreating her, in the softest tones of tenderness, to take care. Isabel stopped—panted—pressed her hand on her heart, and fairly sat down on the stairs.

" And I might have been her!"

She heard different doors opening and shutting; so, fearful of being discovered, she ran down, and had just laid her hand on the door, when it was arrested, and placed within an arm, on which she entered the saloon.

General Hope had waited for her at the foot of the stairs.

Lord Cecil Vernon happened to be placed next to Damerel at dinner; and as his next neighbour was a very deaf old dowager, he turned to him, and began remarking on the company.

- "What a very elegant young woman Mrs. Hope is," said Lord Cecil.
- "Very much so," replied Damerel; "she is universally admired, I believe."
 - "Do you know her well, Mr. Damerel?"
- "She is first cousin to Lady Geraldine," replied Damerel guardedly.
- "Poor Mrs. Hope!" said Lord Cecil, half musing; "what could ever induce one so young, so very attractive as herself, to throw herself away on Hope, who, though everything estimable as a man, is yet old enough to be her father.—Strange match, eh?"
- "I have always heard they were happy enough," said Damerel, bending over his soup.
 - "Can't say," replied Lord Cecil; "but

should say not by those tearful eyes—depend upon it, she has had a good fit of crying to-day. No, no—I know Hope well—he is not the man to make a frightened girl happy: besides, you know it was never a love-match on her side—indeed, I heard something about a de convenance, eh?"

"I never heard," said Damerel, colouring.

"Didn't you?—ah! Hope is an old friend of mine. I remember, when he married, he wrote me word that he had chosen the mistress of his house for her grace, her manners, and her calm elegance—not for her love, because she had confessed that was not in her power to give; and he did not much care, so as she obeyed him, &c. But really he seems fond of her, eh?"

"I wonder," said Damerel, hardly knowing what he said, "whether she—whether Isa—Mrs. Hope cared for—liked any one else"—

"Oh yes," said Lord Cecil, twisting his moustaches with the greatest nonchalance; "I have every reason to believe her heart—indeed, I heard from undoubted authority, that, poor thing, her whole affections belong to one who deserted her."

"Has your Lordship any idea who that one is?" said Damerel, colouring, over brow and face, the deepest crimson.

"I have been abroad for four years with my regiment," was Lord Cecil's only reply; but his quick, dark blue eye had rested on Damerel's intellectual brow, so deeply tinged, with a scrutiny that soon satisfied itself that he only was the one—and Lord Cecil was sorry then that he had spoken on the subject. Men have often a greater respect for each other's feelings than women. It is very seldom that one man

will wantonly wound another, whether that other be friend or stranger.

"Isabel," laughed Geraldine, leaning behind d'Avignon, who sat between them; "do just look at William! I wonder what Lord Cecil was saying—what a pity light people cannot blush white—look at him."

"I never look at people when they colour," said Isabel, in a low voice; "it is in itself quite painful enough, without the additional annoyance of being observed."

"I don't think it would quite kill William, if you looked at him," said Geraldine, provoked at the rebuke. Isabel was silent; for she never had a good answer ready at these times—but the sentence gave her a sharp-cutting pang.

After dinner, Geraldine threw herself on a sofa, and appeared to sleep; so no one disturbed

her—but Lady Helen and Isabel walked up and down the wide terrace in the clear moonlight, talking together.

- "My dear Mrs. Hope," said Lady Helen, in her quick, brusque way, "I have been dreadfully annoyed to-day—you know we have all our secret grievances.
 - "We have," said Isabel, sighing.
- "Well—my present grievance is Cecil's coming here: do tell me if the General has said anything to you about him?"
- "Not to-day; but I have often heard him say, that Lord Cecil fought by his side at Waterloo, and had two horses killed under him—indeed, he has always spoken of him in the highest terms."
- ... "Ah, my dear, that is the very thing that annoys me so; because General Hope, I know,

has a high opinion of me, and the company I keep: but Cecil came uninvited, and my husband is not nearly so particular as yours,—and of course your marriage and honeymoon, and all that, has kept the General in ignorance of many things that have lately occurred in our set. What do you think of my nephew, Mrs. Hope?"

- "He is exceedingly agreeable, and I thought very handsome."
- "Ah, I know; he is fascinating in his manners, and universally acknowledged to be the handsomest man in England, but—but have you seen any papers lately?"
 - " No; we have travelled about so much."
- "You cannot guess why Lord Cecil Vernon came under the shelter of his blue aunt's roof?"
 - "I have not an idea."

"Come here," said Lady Helen, and she turned the corner of the house into the broad moonlight. "Look here," she continued; and taking out of her pocket (a 'bas-bleu' generally wears a pocket) a newspaper of two months' date, she pointed to the words: "Trial by Jury, Huntly and others v. Vernon."

"That," said Lady Helen, "is the whole trial, instituted by a party of injured men to prove Cecil a—what shall I call him?—worse than a gambler, for that I always feared he was, but this investigation has proved his having cheated at cards. It is a most disgraceful affair, but the worst is to come. His fellow-officers first cut him, and now they have cashiered him; and here he is, my dear Mrs. Hope, after all this most dishonourable 'éclat,' under my roof, I grieve to say, in all the full

power of his careless, shameless impudence.

A dismissed officer in my house !—a man under a cloud taking refuge here !"

- "Dreadful!" said Isabel, whose sense of military honour was so high.
- "No words can speak my feelings or shame," said Lady Helen, "because he feels not for himself; only fancy a sword being broken over a Vernon's head! However, I am glad the General has said nothing about it, as that proves he does not mind his being in the house."
 - "Perhaps my husband does not know it?"
- "I should think he must, but—isn't it cold, Mrs. Hope? suppose we go in. I'm going to get up a waltz, I hope.

The gentlemen had all assembled when Isabel and her lively clever hostess entered the

room. Geraldine was half reclining on the sofa, across the back of which leant Lord Cecil—the gay, the fascinating, the cashiered! On a low ottoman at her feet sat Adolphe d'Avignon. At the end of the room sat Damerel and General Hope, playing at chess. It was strange to Isabel to see those two together! She did not venture to go near General Hope, but as she seated herself at a little distance, she heard the light joyous laugh of Damerel, as he said: "I'm done for, General, you've taken my queen, and the interest of the game is over."

- " Is it so?" thought Isabel.
- "A quadrille! a quadrille!" cried Lady
 Helen; come Mrs. Hope—now, gentlemen,
 take your partners."
 - "Thank you, I don't dance," said Mrs. Hope.

The General had begun another game.

- "Not dance?—oh yes! you must dance, my dear Mrs. Hope. What are they about? Why don't you stand up, my dear people?"
- "Not going to dance, Isabel?" said Geraldine; "you must be joking?"
- "Indeed I am not, I don't wish it; who are you engaged to?"
- "I don't know yet; I'm going to choose from three in a minute; but why don't you dance, my dear creature?—now I know that it is all the old—the General's fault; he told you not, didn't he? I'm certain he did! the idea! I should like William to tell me I shouldn't dance!"
- "I never told you General Hope wished me not to dance?" said Isabel, quickly.
 - "But I can see it-don't deny it, or I shall

go and ask him—oh, I've such an idea in my head, ha, ha!"—and away flew Geraldine. She leant over the back of the General's chair; she placed one little fair hand on his shoulder, and Isabel saw her look up in his face, whilst he shook his head laughingly, with that glance of bewitching beauty so irresistible from her brilliant eyes. Damerel, too, was laughing; and in his eyes was a look of pride and affection as he watched his young wife's entreaties. bel walked away to the piano, and sat down out of sight, whilst the music struck up the quadrilles. Curiosity tempted her to rise as the different couples started, and there to her amazement and indignation, she saw Geraldine playfully leaning on the arm of her apparently flattered partner, who was no other than—General Hope!

Isabel felt her head swimming, and she sat down; her eyes were dim, she saw nothing, but felt a hand take her's, and the thrill that shot through her told her whose it was. She tried to move, but fearful of fainting, she sat still.

- "They are all dancing," said that voice of other days, "why shouldn't we?"
 - " I- I cannot," articulated the wife.
- "Isabel," said Damerel, in the low impassioned tone of his lover-days, "you are not happy; pardon me, but there still lives an interest for you in my breast, which—"
 - "William," cried Isabel, "in pity!"
- "They see us not; we are unnoticed; Isabel, tell me but one thing: you are not happy, but I never knew it till to-night. Oh, Isabel, would to God I had not myself to blame for your fate!"

- " You have not," murmured Isabel.
- "Tell me if ever you feel as bitterly as I have done this evening that—that—"
 - " Thank God, William, you are happy!"
- "It is not enough, Isabel. I have seen too plainly to-night that the sin of your unhappiness is on my head, and to know myself happy makes the torture greater to bear. Why, what did we ever—"
- "The quadrille is done," said Isabel. Damerel started up and walked away. At the opposite side of the room sat Geraldine, absolutely flirting with General Hope!

CHAPTER XIV.

Isabel retired immediately to her room, and remained there on the plea of fatigue. It was very late when the General entered, but he found her sitting at the open window, with the night air blowing on her long dark hair. They had not spoken since the dispute, and Isabel was afraid to look round, but she heard him approach and close a window behind her.

- " How are you, Isabel?"
- "Quite well; I was only very tired."
- "The air is very cold to-night, I think."

- "Yes, thank you," said Isabel, wishing herself in the Red Sea.
- "Isabel," said the General, "it is for me to thank you to-night; come, let us be friends," and he held out his hand.

Isabel was overcome; she clasped the offered hand to her lips, and kissed it warmly, but she could not speak.

- "If I have unconsciously, unintentionally wounded, hurt, or offended you," said the General, "I am now come to ask you to forgive me!"
- "Hugh, Hugh, do not ask such a thing from me, when I have so much to be obliged to you about."
- "My dear Isabel, you shall now have my reasons. I begged you this evening not to dance, because I was fearful Lord Cecil Vernon

might engage you, and as he is no longer my friend, as his character of late deprives him of that title, I was unwilling that you should have any communication with him."

- "Indeed, General Hope, your wish without a reason is enough for me."
- "Another thing I have to say. Can you be prepared—or never mind preparation—I was going to say, we must leave this place to-morrow morning; are you ready to start?"
 - " How very odd," said Isabel.
- "The horses are ordered at eight; we shall breakfast after one stage," said General Hope, not heeding the interruption; "will you see that your maid makes no delay, my dear?"
 - "Certainly; but why is this?"
- "I don't choose to remain in the house with Vernon; the world will soon tell you why."

"Good Heavens!" thought Isabel, "where will my husband's whims end?"

It was broad daylight when Isabel closed her aching eyes, for she had superintended her packing herself, and at eight the next morning she found herself seated in her carriage on her way to town.

- "How nice it would be," said Isabel, as they dashed through the streets, "if you were to let me drink tea with mamma this evening, instead of dining, General Hope?"
 - " I thought, my dear, you were tired?"
- "Ah, but consider how delightful to see them all again! I have not seen them since my marriage, and Everhard has got leave of absence; in short—"
- "In short," said General Hope, rather annoyed that his wife should think of anything

but the splendid house in Whitehall Place, of which she was to take possession that evening, "in short you are bent upon it, so it's no use talking," and he bent forward to take the check string.

- "On no account," said Isabel, hastily, "not for worlds, if you had rather I went with you—I only mentioned home because I thought we might pass near."
- "Park Lane is not your home," said the General, sternly, "but I have no objection to your drinking tea with your mother."
 - " Indeed, I had rather not."
- "But did you not tell me you wished it, Isabel?"
 - " I only asked you to allow me."
- "And I'do—my dearest love; why, in Heaven's name, do you look so like a frightened hare?

one would think I were a cannibal, at least. Isabel, when shall I ever teach you to love and not fear me. We have been married now three months, nearly; and yet you are just as shy, just as timid as you were before I became your husband—it is absurd, my love—quite absurd. How differently your cousin behaves to Damerel."

- "I don't think you would suffer me to treat you, as she treats him," said Isabel.
- "I see nothing unbecoming in her conduct to him," replied the General.
- "Would you like me to contradict you every moment?"
 - " It is not your nature, my love."
- "Would you allow me to do everything you begged me not?"
 - " It is Lady Geraldine's playful manner."

- "Would you see me waltz, dance, flirt, and ride with M. d'Avignon, every day?" said Isabel, getting rather warm.
- "Come, my dear," said General Hope, smiling, "we will stop there—you are not on even ground I am not Damerel."

This was an unlucky speech.

- "My God, no!" cried Isabel, utterly unconscious of the energetic tone of bitterness with which she breathed the words—then starting, she added "nor am I Geraldine!"
- "We will drop the subject," said the General, as coldly as he could.
- "What—what did you th—think, I meant?" said Isabel, terrified at his manner.
- "It is of little consequence," replied her husband, his deep-set eyes flashing fire; "that I am not William Damerel, I know too well,

but your delicacy, Mrs. Hope, might have restrained the expression of the fact from your lips! this cannot last long, Isabel."

- "Last?" exclaimed his wife, "what can you mean? oh General Hope, forgive me! indeed I—oh do not speak again! be but kind to me—be but less grave—less stern, and Heaven knows how anxiously I could bend to your will. Hugh, Hugh, say I have not offended you! I, who have no life but in your smile—Hugh, do not misunderstand me so cruelly!"
- "Alas!" said the General, sadly, "you give me no room to misunderstand—your retrospective allusions are but too plain."
- " Heaven help me!" said Isabel, in despair, " if this goes on my heart will break."

Isabel shed no tears now—her grief—her utter anguish was too deep.

"Isabel, I am not angry," said the General, in his mildest tone, "the fault was mine, I have not cherished you rightly; in time, perhaps, you may yet learn to love me."

"Oh Hugh, how dearly!" murmured Isabel, and she pillowed her aching head on his breast.

"Here is Park Lane," said General Hope, after a pause of some minutes, "I shall leave you, and go down to the House; and at ten the carriage shall come for you: give my love to them."

Isabel sprang out unassisted, and flew up the well-known stairs, before the servants, who were hurrying to announce her. At the top of the stairs, she met Fanny, and the next moment was clasped to her mother's heart. It was long before the agitated young wife could speak, for so completely had she been upset by

the occurrences of the last few days, that her spirits nearly gave way on meeting once more the tenderness of her own fire-side.

- "Your father and brother both dine out, my darling," said Mrs. Herbert, "but they will be back before you go—take off your bonnet, my love—good Heavens, dearest, how thin you are!"
- "My dear Isabel, how ill you look!" cried Fanny, "how in the world is this?"
- "Indeed, it is all fatigue—I am half dead with fatigue, my dear mamma—I am perfectly well."
 - " And happy of course," smiled Mrs. Seyton.
- "That of course," replied Isabel, and turned half away. Fanny looked at her sister, and sighed.
- "But," continued her mother, "have you dined, my love?"

- "No, mamma, I am going to beg tea with you and Fanny."
- "Oh! have something more substantial, my dear, only think of your journey."
- " Well, anything you like."
- "I'll go and see about it," said Mrs. Seyton, and she left the room.
- "Thank goodness you and I are alone," said Fanny, drawing her chair close to her sister's; tell me, Isabel, how did you like the Vernons?"
- "We were only there three days. General Hope came away suddenly."
 - " Large party in the house?"
- "Yes, very large—amongst them, a lord Cecil Vernon, a nephew. General Hope brought me away, because he did not like to be in the house with him."

- "How strange !-well and who else was there, dear Isabel?"
 - "Guess, Fanny."
 - "Oh my dear, I might guess for ever."
 - "Geraldine, of all people."
 - " And William Damerel?"
 - " Even so," said Isabel, trying to smile.
- "And how did you meet? how did he behave?" said Fanny, eagerly.
- "He was all kindness and placidity—I, dear Fanny—heigho!—I could hardly bear it—oh! he makes such an idolizing husband."
 - " And Geraldine?"
- "She does not love him as such a man deserves!"
 - "How do you like your husband?"
- "I?—Why, my dear Fanny, what a strange question!"

- "Ah, don't be mysterious with me!" cried the affectionate Fanny, winding her arms round Isabel. "My own dear sister! you are not happy! Tell me, are you?"
 - "Fanny, what can possess you?"
- "I see it in your eyes. You have been tamed by General Hope and his severity. Oh, Isabel, I wish I had that man to deal with!"
- "Fanny, my dear girl, I cannot let you run away with this idea. General Hope is as kind and as fond a husband as I could ever have."
 - "Then you are afraid of him?"
 - "That may be."
 - " Why are you?"
- "Curious girl! you will have the whole. I I am afraid of him, it's true; I am terrified at his calm control. I feel bowed down before his infinite superiority."

- "Nonsense!" interrupted Fanny; "only because he happens to be twenty or thirty years your senior! And this fear has stolen your nice colour!—this has made you thin! Oh, Isabel!"
- "You think me unhappy, my dear girl; but if I am, it is my own fault."
 - "There comes your old sentence!"
- "I meant that the General has nothing to do with it."
- "Why don't you fire up when he begins to command?"
 - "I daren't?"
 - "Oh, nonsense! I would!"
 - " Not to General Hope."
- "Try next time. Tell him you will not bear it."
 - " And he would laugh."

- "Oh that laugh of his! I remember, Isabel, how that laugh used to fascinate you at Strathever, while it always made me shudder. Did Damerel appear very devoted to his wife?"
 - " I think so."
 - "Did he ever try to flirt with you?"
- "Once only—that was last night; but it was more than flirting. I began to fear it was a touch of old days, so I stopped him."
 - " What did the General say?"
 - " He did not see us."
 - "Does he mind your flirting?"
- "He never suffers it. Good gracious, I think he would chill me into a petrifaction—into stone!"
 - "Does Geraldine flirt as much as ever?"
- "Yes; and more openly. She flirts too much a great deal with those two foreigners, Di

Sorrento and D'Avignon. Her husband does not understand Italian."

- " Do you think William minds it?"
- "He says nothing. He thinks it amuses her, and that is enough for his warm, honest heart! But, my dear Fanny, let me entreat one thing, don't say 'William' before General Hope,—it reminds him that—that—that—once——"
- "Isabel!" whispered her sister, throwing her arms round her; "you have not forgotten those other days!"
 - "Oh, Fanny, don't say that!"
- "I wish—I wish!" cried Fanny, "that I had to deal with General Hope! Isabel, you ought to have some spirit. Geraldine would not bear such taming—why should you?"
 - "We are very differently situated."
 - "You know you cannot go on long in this

way, growing thin and pale, and subdued. It cannot last, Isabel!"

- "Good Heavens!" said Isabel, starting,
 "how dreadful those words sound! General
 Hope said them to me once, when he was very
 angry, and—oh, I thought I should have died!
 If—if he were ever to wish to separate from me
 —oh, Fanny, I should die—I am convinced of
 it!"
- "Separate!" said Fanny, colouring indignantly; "then, Isabel, come home!"
- "I have but one home—his heart!" said Isabel, fervently.
 - "Whose?" said her sister, enquiringly.

Isabel turned and fixed on Fanny one long look of such intense yet pure astonishment, that her more practised sister shrunk from the scrutiny, and turned the conversation. Soon after,

Mr. Seyton and Everhard came in, and the whole family drew round the tea-table.

Isabel never felt her home, her old home, so dear before. There she was, sitting by the same old, ancient-looking silver urn,—there was her father, looking just as contented and happy as ever,—her mother, with the identical plumcoloured dress and white cap,—Everhard opposite, as merry and wilful, and Fanny as spirited and pretty as ever;—all was the same, and yet Isabel felt it was not the same to her. She heard the carriage come for her at ten, and she was on the point of saying, "I'll come home again soon," when the words retreated from her lips, and she checked the rising sigh.

The General received her in Whitehall Place.

"What? the House up so soon?" said his wife.

- " I didn't go; I changed my mind."
- "Dear me—why didn't you—I mean they would have been so delighted to have seen you at home—I—I—in Park Lane, I mean."
- "I have had letters that will prevent our going out for some time," said the General, gravely.

Isabel was silent. The beauty of the boudoir into which her husband had led her, bewildered her with its blaze of light. Yet she collected her thoughts, and tried to think what the General meant. She knew he had no parents, and his elder brother was not on terms with him.

- " Nothing sad, I hope?" she said at last.
- "Yes—sad," said the General; "because death has come between two people who, having been at variance on earth, can hardly hope to meet again in another world. My brother died at Naples last Monday."

Isabel was shocked, though she did not know him; yet almost insensibly she murmured,—

- "Dear Hugh, had I known it! Why did you not send for me?"
- "I was unwilling to mar your pleasure, dearest?"
- "Ah, Hugh, as if my greatest would not have been to be with you! Does this affect us?"
- "It makes you Viscountess Hopeville," said the General; "and now you have a title too!"

CHAPTER XV.

"On the 15th inst. at Vernon Hall, the seat of the Honourable John Vernon, the Lady Geraldine Damerel of a son and heir."

Such was the announcement that almost startled Lady Hopeville one morning, when her husband read it from the list of births in the Morning Post. She was startled, because the news was so unexpected. Isabel had never given the subject a thought; for, having left her cousin one month before in the full glow of girlish playfulness and childish mirth, it seemed

strange to think of her as a mother—as the mother of the son and heir of William Damerel!

Lady Hopeville knew little of the movements of her family; for, having been raised by her husband's rank to another circle, and surrounded by another set, the events in all her former circle were only made known to her through the medium of the newspapers. With Geraldine she had never regularly corresponded; and, therefore, the announcement astonished her, though she knew her ground too well to express any feeling except slight pleasure.

- "I'm glad she has a son," was all she said; and Lord Hopeville's reply was simply,—
 - "It is fortunate, for the sake of the estates."
 So there the subject ended.

About two months after this, in the very height of a very gay season, when Isabel's time was entirely taken up both night and day with 'réunions,' she was one day roused from the drowsy silence of her solitary and late breakfast table by a visitor, whose appearance made her start in a manner quite exploded in the non-chalant circles of fashion.

- " Mr. Damerel!"
- "How d'ye do, my dear Lady Hopeville!"
 said the glad free voice. "Here we are, you
 see! very near you—only in Carlton Gardens
 —three minutes' walk!"
- "How is Geraldine? I had no idea of your being in town—have you been long?"
- "Only arrived last night; first visit of course to you. But I am disturbing you, I am sure, by the sight of your dejeuné; I fear you must have scarcely begun."
- "On the contrary, I had finished. Pray stay, as I—Lord Hopeville, I fear is out."

- "Oh! never mind," said Damerel, who seemed in joyous spirits; "I came with a message from my wife."
 - "How is Geraldine?" repeated Isabel.
- "Very delicate, I grieve to say—quite an invalid—laid up on her sofa, but still looking—you will see her, however!—it is of my child I would speak, of my baby, Isabel!"
- "Dear child!" murmured Isabel; "how I should like to see it!"
- "I came with a message from Geraldine, to entreat you to come and see her soon; it must be very soon. She is lonely, and ordered to see no strangers."
- "I will come, with the greatest pleasure, whenever dear Geraldine likes, if she is ill, dear girl!" exclaimed Isabel, in the warmth of her kind forgiving heart. "What hour shall it be, Mr. Damerel?"

"Oh, all hours are alike to her; but, if you don't mind, come when I'm out (a chill ran through Isabel), because I dread leaving her alone, and I should not be anxious were you with her. She is very solitary, and I am sure you will be a friend in need, my dear Lady Hopeville. You were always kind and generous to Geraldine." (Isabel almost groaned.) "Will you, then, come very soon?"

- "Let me see," said Isabel, taking her tablets;

 "to-day I must attend the meeting of the ladies
 at Willis's Rooms."
 - "Ha! you are one of the patronesses!
- "Yes; to-morrow, a déjeuné at Rochampton. Wednesday, I must nurse for the king's ball in the evening."
 - "Ha! you are a favourite at court!"
 - "They say so-empty honour!" sighed Lady

Hopeville. "Thursday, nothing but two soirées. I can come Thursday."

- "Not till Thursday! and this Monday!" said Damerel, dejectedly. Isabel paused.
- "Let me see. To-day—why—yes! I could send an excuse to Almack's. Shall I come to-day?"
 - "Thank you a thousand times!"
 - " I'll order the carriage immediately."
 - "Do you never walk?"
 - "Oh, yes, sometimes, but---"
- "Walk to-day, then! it is so lovely! Let me show you a short cut—the distance is nothing. Do walk, Isabel!"

Isabel turned to the window, and saw the sun shining brightly, and all nature looking happy, whilst she—why should she not walk?

"I'll be ready in a second!" she said, and away she flew, to prepare.

Damerel sat down at the writing table, on which the Dresden déjeuné had been placed. First he examined the beautiful china; then traced figures on the tray with milk; next, opened a drawer—tossed over a chaos of papers, took out a splendid ivory writing-case, and finally upset its contents upon the floor! In awkward haste he began to collect them, when a bundle of letters caught his eye. They were his own! He sighed, and replaced them. Then came an extract from a newspaper—it was his maiden speech! He replaced that too. Next came "Lines to W.D." He shudderedtouched the paper as if it were red hot-held it from him as if it would scorch him,—and, condemn him not !-- read the closing verse !

"Oh! I have scattered thorns in life's fair track,
And thrown with thoughtless hand thy love away;
Yet if one smile of mine could win thee back,
A world—a world of smiles should court thy stay."

They were dated one week after her rejection of him! He remembered it well!

Damerel started up and clenched his hand on hisbrow; yetstill he retained sufficient self-possession to replace all the things as they were before, and then, flinging himself on a chair, exclaimed bitterly:—

" Poor, poor Isabel !-- I pity you !"

And this is all poor weak fond woman gains for deathless love !--Pity!

Isabel re-entered the room, dressed for her walk, light and gay of heart. Damerel watched

her movements. She rang the bell and ordered her carriage to fetch her home; left a message for Lord Hopeville should he miss her; took a small key from a ribbon round her neck, and locked that drawer.

- "Now I'm ready: thank you. How patient you are, Mr. Damerel! I fear I kept you very long?"
- "Long, long ago!" muttered Damerel, almost inaudibly.
- "Did I? I am so sorry! How did you amuse yourself? the papers are not in, I fear?"
 - "Yes, indeed, just as you left them!"
 - " How strange! I didn't see them!"
- "Would to God I hadn't!" exclaimed Damerel, starting up. Isabel looked round in astonishment.
- "Forgive me, Lady Hopeville, I was in a reverie; are you ready?"

- "Quite," said Isabel, gaily; "it makes one feel as light as air to walk in this bright sunshine."
 - "You seldom walk?"
 - " Hardly ever."
 - " And your health never suffers?"
- "I hardly know; I sometimes fancy a walk would revive me."
 - " And yet you do not walk?"
 - " No."
 - " And your reason?"
 - " My husband dislikes it."
- "By Heaven, Isabel, you are perfection!" exclaimed Damerel.
- "For not disobeying my husband?" said the wife, with a smile.
- "No, but for your gentle, amiable, forgiving, heavenly patience!"

"Patience!" said Lady Hopeville; "is patience a merit when I am sailing down life's stream in a gilded bark?"

Damerel hurried on.

- " Isabel, surely you are not apathetic?"
- "I was never accused of it," laughed Isabel; but nevertheless her cheek crimsoned; and as she turned to catch the cool morning breeze, the hue spread over throat and brow. A gentleman passed and bowed.

It was Lord Cecil Vernon.

- "I'm sure I've seen that face," said Damerel,
 "with its scornful smile."
 - "I think I knew it," said Isabel.

It was a pity—a pity that those gentle lips should stoop to utter even a prevarication. Isabel had, unseen by Damerel, recognized Lord Cecil by a bow, and she feared to say so! Why she could not tell!

Lady Geraldine Damerel was listlessly stretched on her sofa, when Isabel was ushered into the costly boudoir.

Beautiful, more than earthly, seemed the statue-like cast of the young mother's countenance, as, unconscious of her cousin's approach, she lay with her large clear eyes turned wistfully on the green expanse of park, and her rich peculiarly-tinted lips curling peevishly in relief against the pure, colourless, yet rounded cheek.

"This is a charity!" she exclaimed, starting up as Lady Hopeville entered; "dear Isabel, how glad I am to see you! I was beginning to get so wretchedly dull and bored with my bodyguard of physicians and nurses!"

"I should think your new plaything must effectually dispel all your 'vapeurs noirs,'"

smiled Isabel, bending kindly to meet the ready embrace.

- "My baby is a pet," said the beauty, carelessly; "but it will cry sometimes, and that annoys me; William worships it; he doesn't care for crying fits, and makes a capital head-nurse—but Isabel, how is my dear old flirt—pardon—I mean your good Lord?"
- "Quite well, thank you; he does not know of your arrival."
- "No, I suppose not; only think of my keeping all the Vernons there in the country six weeks with my illness! I was so provoked, but Adolphe was to blame!"
 - " How?"
- "Oh, he tossed me out of his tandem quite by accident, and that frightened them all out of their wits, and William was 'au désespoir' because I received a scratch on my forehead."

"Good Heavens, Geraldine, were you not hurt?"

"No, only terrified to death; well, and then my little son came; but it was William's fault entirely, for not forbidding me to venture in that 'diable de tandem,' as Adolphe calls it."

Isabel smiled inwardly when she thought of all the tender expostulations thrown away on that very subject.

- " I don't think he knows you are here," continued Geraldine; " I'll ring."
- " I think he's out, Geraldine; I walked here with him."
- "Did you really!" laughed her young Ladyship, opening her eyes; "what fun! you'll have such a scolding!"
 - " How?-for what?"
 - " For doing so, to be sure; you see, if the

old Ge—I mean if your Lord does not tell you it's highly improper and indecorous, and highly unbecoming, ha, ha, ha!"

- "Nonsense, Geraldine! two married people!"
- "' Qu'est-ce cela fait? tant mieux, belle innocence.' Oh dear, how I should enjoy hearing you and the General quarrelling—"
 - " Geraldine!"
 - " Nay, don't look so shocked!"
- "My dear girl, what harm was there in walking a few yards with your husband?"
- "Oh, I see none, nor will William; but wait and see what the General says, that's all! I'm not jealous, because I know, you dear uncomplaining Isabel, that you pay dearly for any misdemeanour—now don't colour up; what's that blush for?"

- "To shield, if possible, my husband's honoured name," said Isabel, mildly.
 - " I was only laughing, ' cugina carissima!"
- "' Basta cosi,'" smiled Isabel, instantly pacified. "Let us think of your baby."
- "You shall see it," and Geraldine rang a bell. The sumptuously dressed infant was brought in. "There it is, young monster who's it like, Isabel?"

Isabel felt a gasping, choking sensation, and, unable to frame words, she pretended to examine the little features.

- "Is it like me?"
- "Like-your husband, certainly."
- " And not me?"
- "Yes-both-what glorious eyes!"
- "I'm afraid William claims them. Give it to me, poor little soul!"

Isabel gazed silently on the miniature loveliness of Damerel's child! There was his high, wide brow—his pale, brown eyebrows, and wild, open, yet touching blue eyes—his round chin, and curved lip—even his smile, in miniature!

Sad, spiritless, and dejected, Isabel returned to her home.

Ensconced and fairly concealed by a double sheet of the *Times*, in the club-room, sat Lord Hopeville, when he heard a well-known voice utter the following sentence:

"So, Hopeville is taken in after all! This morning, before twelve, I met the anti-flirtation bride alone in Carlton Gardens, with her quondam cavaliere—Damerel!"

The General went home to dinner.



THE LADY GERALDINE.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHEERFULLY, as usual, Isabel sustained more than her part in the tête-à-tête conversation—the General was grave. She introduced other subjects—the General was silent. She went to the drawing-room, and the General followed her. He took a newspaper, and drew his chair to the window; but the Morning Post was transversed—he was not reading.

"There's something the matter, I'm sure," thought his wife, as she took sundry long strips of cambric, and seated herself close to him.
"I wonder—"

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THE LADY GERALDINE.

- "Isabel!" said the General awfully.
- "My Lord?" Isabel almost started up.
- "Have you been out to-day?"
- "Yes, my dear."
- "Where did you go?"
- "The Damerels are in town, Hugh."
- "Where did you go?"
- "To see my cousin Geraldine."
- "And you went in the carriage, of course?"
- "I returned in it. The morning was so very lovely that—that—"
 - "You walked, I suppose?"
- "I know I did, Hugh," said Isabel, her heart fluttering between vexation and fear.
 - "With whom?"
 - "Mr.-Mr. Damerel."
- "Alone with Mr. Damerel?" said Lord Hopeville, fixing his eyes calmly and steadily

on Isabel's countenance. "I fear, my dear," continued he, in a tone of cool sarcasm, "from your hesitation, and that becoming colour, that I am asking an unpleasant question?"

- "I do not hesitate," said Isabel; "and as to colouring, General—I mean, Lord Hopeville—"
- "Never mind my title: it seems that Lord Hopeville is a much less formidable person in your eyes than General Hope, if I may judge from this morning's exploits, Isabel!"
- "You look me through and through, out of countenance, and then wonder that I blush—colour."
- "How long have my eyes been so fearful, my dear? Since this morning, I fancy."
- "Something has annoyed you," said Isabel, colouring again proudly. "I wish your Lord-ship would tell me plainly what it is?"

"Perhaps your Ladyship would kindly answer my first question," said the General coolly.

"Certainly. It was, whether I had walked to see Lady Geraldine Damerel this morning, alone with her husband. My reply is very short—I did!"

Isabel could be firm, if roused.

The General looked staggered. "Is this," he thought, "bravado or innocence?"

"And you think, Lady Hopeville, that this was decorous—or proper—or becoming?"

Isabel tried to be grave; but her cousin's warning recalled itself, and she fairly laughed.

The General rose to leave the room.

"When your Ladyship is serious, be so obliging as to inform me."

His Lordship was highly nettled; but more at the reports which Isabel's proceeding had given rise to, than at the thing itself.

- "Forgive me!" said Isabel, still laughing; but really I cannot see the harm of two married people walking from one house to another together!".
- "So," said the General, stopping short, "that is your view of the case?"
- "Certainly. I'm sure Mr. Damerel would never have minded Geraldine's walking here alone with you; though I admit—"
 - "What?" demanded the husband sternly.
 - " I-oh, never mind."
- "I wish to know what you were going to say?"
 - "And then, Hugh, you will be angry!"
 - "Never mind my anger, ma'am."
- "Oh Hugh!" interrupted Isabel, her eyes filling with tears, "do not think I could coldly bear that!"
 - "What were you going to admit? I shall

not be surprised at anything or anybody that you admit now!"

"A very pretty thing to say to your wife!" said -Isabel, colouring. "But I was going to say, that certainly there is a world of difference between you and Mr. Damerel!"

"Possibly!" said the incensed husband;

"yet I would recall to your Ladyship's tardy

remembrance the situation in which you were

once placed, with regard to Mr. Damerel!"

"Alas!" said Isabel, in a tone of deep feeling, and bending over her work; "is it for you, Hugh, to accuse me of tardy remembrance? Is it for you to recall that situation? Spare me such reproaches—we ought to understand each other, ere this. I did not deceive you in any way, when I married you. I thank you, my dearest husband," continued Isabel, bursting

into tears, "for your kindness hitherto. God knows it has been more than I deserve; but I never expected it to last, for my disposition is too cold for your warm heart!"

- "Isabel," said her husband, in a low subdued tremulous voice, "am I to understand that you do not care for me?—that you never can love me?"
 - "You do not care to know, Lord Hopeville."
- " Is your life with me simply existence and endurance?"
- "I cannot endure, my Lord. I exist, in the hope that I am doing my duty by you. I knew not endurance until this day, when—but I will say no more. I dread irritating you; and yet, I confess I pity you, if—if—you repent having married me!"

VOL. II.

"Never!" said the General, eagerly. "I never repented that step. Isabel, forgive me!"

"I have nothing to forgive, Hugh."

The General paced the room.

"Isabel, if you would but warm with the subject, you would always convince me. If you would but get angry!"

This was more than Isabel could bear. She remembered who said that last! She started up, and left the room—it was her last resource!

The General threw himself on the sofa, and buried his face in his hands.

It was midnight, and Lord Hopeville sat alone in his dressing-room. He thought not of the hour, for his thoughts were elsewhere; and it was not until the first quarter of another day had chimed that he started from his deep reverie, and paced the room. The grey light of dawn streamed through the unclosed windows, and softly and noiselessly he entered his wife's chamber. Isabel was sitting at the open window, leaning her forehead on the ledge.

"Isabel! these night damps are very dangerous!"

Lady Hopeville looked up.

- "Shall I shut the window, Isabel?"
- "If you please,—certainly."
- "Why are you sitting up, my dearest?"
- "I could not sleep!"
- "Not, I suppose, until I had come, like a culprit, and begged pardon, which I now do most humbly;" said the General, smiling. "Isabel, do you bear malice?"
 - "Oh, Hugh!"
 - "I am not ashamed to acknowledge my fault,

nor to ask forgiveness. Let us be friends, my dearest."

Kindly, gentle, patient Isabel rested with a comparatively light heart that night; as for the first time in her life, she felt she had conquered her superior in spirit by her enduring sweetness. Often and often, however, Isabel, in the crowded circles in which she moved, looked round for one as noble, as gentle-looking, as stately, or as mildly pre-eminent as Lord Hopeville. She felt herself doubly respected as his wife, and she soon began to be proud of him—proud to hear his praises—proud to see the deference paid to his opinions.

She was often destined to hear the names of "Lady Geraldine and Mr. Damerel" announced, and her shrinking eye would turn to gaze upon them; but even then her heart would turn

from the clear brow, the light curling hair, the blue eye, and the smiling lip of Damerel, to the proud pale forehead, the deep-set eye, the calm smile yet stern lip of the General, and silently own "It is well! my husband is, without doubt, the one to be respected most!"

CHAPTER XVII.

Lady Geraldine Damerel was ordered not to receive visitors, for fear of the excitement; therefore, of course, her whole mind was bent on admitting them; and one day, when Damerel was gone to the Horticultural fête, she particucularly said:—

"Whoever calls, I'm at home."

The first announcement was Monsieur d'Avignon.

"Adolphe! why I haven't seen you for an age!"

- "I have felt it centuries!" said the Frenchman, whilst his graceful carelessness contradicted the words. "Yet, if my presence was missed——"
- "Don't flatter yourself, 'mon ami—on ne revient pas toujours à ses premiers amours!"
- "And considering I have so lately been all but the death of one so dear to all as yourself, the sooner I am forgotten the better; particularly as my visit to-day is 'pour dire adieu!'"
- "Adieu!" exclaimed Geraldine, the pink colour flying over her face. "So you are going out of town!"
 - "Unless you wish me to stay, Geraldine:"
- "I?—not I. I don't care whether you go or stay, I'm sure. Where's Guido?"
- "Ah—he joins me," said d'Avignon, bending to Geraldine's ear; "after he has seen you!"

- "Ah, no!" cried Geraldine; "I cannot!"
- "He is imperative; it is now six months since you——"
 - "Give me another six months!"
- "He begged me to prepare you for high mass, on Friday next, at twelve o'clock at night, and—"
- "Good God! how can I leave my house at such a time, Adolphe! Tell him I will see him here, if he likes; but leave my house by stealth, at night, with not one Catholic attendant—no! I dare do many things, but not that—unknown to my husband—my poor, kind, trusting William!"
- "I wish—I wish to heaven," said Adolphe, earnestly; "that you would reveal this secret to him!"
 - "Never! never!" said Geraldine, hiding

her face. "I would die first!—and can you ask it?"

"Yes!" exclaimed d'Avignon, rising and taking the small pale hands in his; "hear me, dear Geraldine, patiently. I loved you once—too well! I once had hopes you might be mine, and on the strength of those hopes aided the plan which made our religions one. I lost you, and from that moment I have loved and admired you only as a brother; but the bitterest moments of my life are still those in which I see you suffer; and you may therefore believe how sincerely I would shun anything that gives you pain. Yet I do advise you to tell your husband plainly."

- " Urge me not !-- I dare not !"
- "Remember that in our religion there is one thing peculiarly startling to a Protestant.

That form you are positively required to go through by Guido;—were any accident suddenly to reveal the truth to Damerel——"

- "What do you mean?—what thing?—what form?"
 - "Confession," whispered d'Avignon.

Geraldine shuddered and turned away.

- "Come what may, Adolphe, my lips shall never open to him, on that subject."
 - "But you will see Guido?"
 - " I will, before he goes."
 - "You will attend the mass?"
 - " No!"
 - "You will confess?"
- "I will: with the full conviction that he has no more power to absolve me, than any other mortal."
 - D'Avignon coloured deeply, but said nothing.

When the silence was broken, it was by Geraldine.

- "I am sorry you are going, Adolphe, because I look upon you as my best—friend."
- "I am glad of it, Geraldine; it is in that light I would be remembered," said the young man, pointedly.

A silent tear stole down Geraldine's cheek.

- " I don't like Guido."
- " And why?"
- "Because he thinks he has power over me," cried Geraldine, her melting eyes now flashing fire; "but he has no such thing, Adolphe! remember, I confess from an inward sense of duty, not because he wishes it—I confess, not for comfort or consolation, but because you—"

There was a long pause.

"Geraldine, take care of yourself; I may not see you again for years."

- "My best wishes attend you," murmured Geraldine, "I hate partings."
- "Then I will not prolong disagreeable moments. Adieu, belle Geraldine."
- "Adieu, mon ami—adieu, Adolphe! have you no sage advice?" and Geraldine smiled mournfully. D'Avignon paused at the door—a strange expression came over the beautiful and spirited features of the Frenchman.
- "You have a guardian spirit in your husband!"

Geraldine curled her lip.

" Make him your best friend, now."

The rosy lip trembled violently.

- " Any commands for Lady Chester?"
- " N-o-n-e."
- " Adieu, donc."

He left the room as gaily as if no burst of

tears fell on his ears, as he danced down stairs. With the true spirit of 'vive la bagatelle,' D'A-vignon thought on Geraldine's grief until he entered the Park; there many a fair hand was waved to him, and a volatile smile lighted his countenance, as he hummed the words of the old song.

" Ce n'est pas ma faute Si je suis aimable!"

Yet Adolphe d'Avignon had a feeling heart—
he could have mourned over his loss and her
tears, but he saw no use in it—he could have
done anything in consolation, but he checked
his inward struggle, by one energetic sigh—one
heartfelt 'à quoi bon ?'

Geraldine paced up and down the room in a fearful state of excitement—she clasped her burning hands on her forehead, but the beating of the pulses was beyond endurance.

"If Isabel were but here, I might be calmed, but there is a remedy, I will try it."

Geraldine took a small phial from her bureau, and dropped the contents on some sugar—she took it, shivered, and threw herself on her sofa.

Five minutes afterwards, Lady Hopeville was announced. Geraldine's pale languor, weighed down eyelids, and drawn features, terrified her.

- "Are you ill, my dear Geraldine? speak, for Heaven's sake!"
- "Not ill, Isabel—but—something has upset me, and—and I took laudanum."
 - "Geraldine!"
- "Very little—talk to me, Isabel; I always take that, when I am restless—it will pass off."
 - " How is the dear child?"
- "Oh, quite well—it is nothing about it, but
 ——I may not tell you, so I must bear all this."

Isabel took her cousin's hand, and felt the heavy languid pulse—she involuntarily thought of poor Herbert—of the cause of his death; and she bent over Geraldine.

- "My dear girl, if this is a practice, you must know it is an injurious one; I sincerely hope you do not often take this remedy?"
- "Yes, nothing else calms me when I am agitated."
- "Dr. H—— particularly begged you not to allow yourself to be excited."
- "It could not be avoided—my feelings are not under my own control like yours—I cannot coldly, calmly, mildly lose the love I thought was mine,—and seek another."

Isabel felt a dagger in her heart, but she was silent.

" I cannot live unloved, Isabel!"

- "You never will while Mr. Damerel belongs to you," said Isabel.
- "And I shall take pretty good care he always does!" retorted Geraldine, "but I was thinking of a different person—of one who has been a brother to me, and—oh you must know I mean Adolphe."
 - "I hope you do not," said Isabel, gravely.
- "I do. Isabel, you cannot understand my feelings; Adolphe has always been a sort of guardian to me, and this morning he came to wish me goodbye for years."

Isabel did not know how to look, when her cousin's inquiring glance fell on her.

"You don't look sorry for me, Isabel; no, you think he is better away; but remember I have been brought up with him—I am quite as

French in heart as he is—I feel England a foreign soil to me—I am a transplanted weed; and papa and mamma and the girls all away in my dear, dear country!—I am alone!"

Geraldine flung her hair back with childish temper.

- "Geraldine, my dear cousin, have you not two of nature's strongest ties to bind your heart to home?"
- "William cannot console or advise me—he is so unaccustomed to seeing a person of strong feelings—he is like you, always at anchor."
- "You are of all created beings the most incomprehensible," said Lady Hopeville; "as for me, Geraldine---"
- "Yes, you are always at anchor, you do not show your feelings; now I know as well as possible ——"

- "Geraldine, think and speak of yourself, but not of me!"
- "Well, when I'm annoyed, or distressed, or angry, or pleased, I show it. I scold, or scream, or cry, or anything, and then William—oh Isabel, that man was never made for a spirit like mine!—he stands like a frightened hare. He tells me I shall spoil my eyes, or break a bloodvessel. He tells me how wretched it makes him. He implores me to control myself for his sake. He rings for a glass of water, and sends me my maid! Is that the way to rule me?—Geraldine!"
 - " My poor dear girl!"
- "Let him come as Adolphe does, or did.

 Let him learn to tune his voice to say, as Adolphe did, 'Calme-toi:' and then I might not miss my early friend!"

Geraldine paused, exhausted; and at that

moment, Damerel, gay and happy, entered. He did not observe Isabel.

- "Ha, Geraldine, my beautiful! Oh, I beg your pardon, Lady Hopeville. I am very glad to see you here. Geraldine, how are you?"
- "Very comfortable, William. Where have you been all day?"
- "At that stupid Chiswick; absent in body, but present with you in heart," said Damerel, laughingly, taking his wife's hand. "I came to ask whether you would mind my dining with some friends at the Clarendon to-night?"
 - " Certainly not."
 - " Does Lady Hopeville dine here?"
 - " I wish she would.-Isabel?"
 - " If you are alone—if you wish it."
- "It would be most kind. Do you think the General would come?"

- "He dines, I believe, where Mr. Damerel is going—at the Clarendon; at least I heard him tell his valet that he——"
- "What?" said Geraldine, smiling. "Then he does not ask leave of absence so prettily as my 'carissimo sposo' does?"

Damerel's eyes glittered, and Isabel turned from them.

- "Well, Geraldine," said he, gaily, "I'll just have an hour's play with little Master Damerel, and then go. I shall be home the moment I can get away. Take care of yourself. Can I do any thing for you?"
- "Oh, when you are in Bond Street, you might as well match that china cup—I broke the other, you know; and if you are passing Turner's, you might see how my diamonds get on—that's all my dear. Yet, stay; you must

go near Mori's, and tell that horrid man he never sent my songs; then there's the coral for dear baby, at Storr and Mortimer's."

- " It's all in my way, my love."
- "I think I've nothing more. Thank you, dear William. There never was such a kind man as you are; goodbye."
 - " Adieu."
- "Oh William, William!—here! Call him, Isabel, please. William!"
 - " Mr. Damerel!"
 - "What?—here I am."
- "I quite forgot one thing. Ask the man at Hart's if my sofa is finished—the one I worked."
 - " My dearest-I do hate that lady's shop."
- "Well, then, my dear, the other things are of no consequence in comparison!"
 - " I'll do it then; that's all?"

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" Yes."

Isabel was silent. "This, then," she thought to herself, " is the volatile, thoughtless Damerel!—the man who is not made for her!"

- " William's very kind in his way, Isabel?"
- " So it seems, Geraldine."
- "Oh yes—I manage him to perfection. He was quite refractory once; but now I can turn him round my finger—don't I?"
 - " You are very fortunate, Geraldine!"
- "Oh--yes; I daresay I am. Now you see I'm quite well again; I feel all alive. I have talked off all the effects of that laudanum; it's rather nasty though—bitter—isn't it?"
- "Very bitter," mused Isabel, her thought far away.
 - " The less of it the better, eh?"
- "It is wonderful how much we may be brought to support," said the dreamer.

- " I never tried more than half a spoonful."
- "Spoonful? Good Heavens! Oh, I forgot.

 Dear me, Geraldine—I wonder—"
 - " What are you thinking of, my dear?"
 - " My husband," said Isabel, starting.
 - " Or mine, eh?"

Lady Geraldine laughed, till her eyes were full of tears, and Isabel blushed till she was obliged to say the room was very warm, and then the blush subsided, and she shivered in a most contradictory manner.

" Isabel—you are an oddity!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SEASON passed—spring again returned—and one evening Damerel returned from a dinner-party early. His first visit was always to his wife's room; but this evening she was asleep in her chair, and having given her one glance, he went to his dressing-room, where he lighted, as usual, his own lamps. He tossed over his papers, intending to lock them up; but one caught his eye, sealed—it was in a small unknown hand.

It was unlikely that an M.P. should be surprised at a letter in an unknown hand; but something made Damerel quail before this one.

He broke open the seal -- a knock came at the door—" Come in."

It was Geraldine's maid.

- "If you please, sir, my lady is awake now, and would be glad to see you."
- "Oh—ah—very well. Tell Lady Geraldine
 I will come in—in—a minute; an hour certainly."
- "My Lady wished me to say, sir, she was very much fatigued."
 - " Well-half an hour."

Damerel opened the letter; there was no signature. He read,—

"If you wish to witness an extraordinary scene in your house, to-morrow night, about eleven, be in the inner-room of your wife's boudoir at that time. Fear not—only conceal vol. II.

yourself; place yourself on the right side of the apparent toilet, and watch.

" A FRIEND IN DISGUISE."

"So!—beauty's fate! Slander already!" said Damerel, crushing the letter, whilst his lip blanched and trembled. "So! I am to distrust Geraldine! my own, pure, beautiful Geraldine!"

Again Damerel read the letter. He could not understand it. He looked at the clock, and saw his half hour had expired. He burnt the letter, and went to wish Geraldine good night; but his whole manner was changed. He tried to behave as usual; but he could not. He knew not what to expect, when told so plainly to penetrate a room, whose threshold he had never crossed. He could not guess what secret he should discover. He wished Geraldine goodnight as calmly as he could; and went to sit up the whole night—musing.

The next day came; he hardly saw his wife or child. He absented himself; and when evening brought a message from Geraldine to see him, he returned for answer,—

"Tell Lady Geraldine I'm off to the House
—it sits late."

Damerel even could say this!

Ten o'clock struck—the husband was concealed behind the festoons of the window, leaning in the recess. Eleven o'clock struck—the door opened slowly, and two figures, in priest's dresses, entered! One was an aged man; the other—Damerel recognized in one instant—Guido di Sorrento!

Guido raised the apparent toilet, and instantly it formed an altar, a crucifix, and a high seat. The priest seated himself, and Guido left the room. It was then that Damerel felt almost

overpowered. He longed to knock the old man down; and his clenched hand pressed his beating forehead, until suddenly the door again opened, and Di Sorrento entered, leading in—Geraldine! Dressed in a plain black dress, pale as ashes, yet looking more lovely than words could say, the young wife sank at the feet of the old priest, whilst Guido again left the room. On that fair bright head, Damerel saw the outstretched hands repose, and then followed a ceremony of words, which told the horror-struck husband that he heard a Catholic's confession!

- "You have not confessed lately, my daughter?"
 - "I have been ill, father."

Geraldine's replies were all but inaudible, from agitation.

"The more need for confession, then. Have

many sinful thoughts, or any sinful deed, need of holy cleansing?"

- " I trust not, father; yet am I no better than the most sinful!"
- "And thine erring husband—art thou true in heart and soul to him?"
- "Father; a weight of sin is mine! I do not love him as I ought. I feel not for him as I should. Give me advice! comfort! consolation!"
- "Does any other object cause this great wickedness, my daughter?"

Damerel had seen enough—he could not hear the reply; for, when he woke from his deep swoon of despair, the figures were gone—the toilet replaced—the lights extinguished—himself alone!

Was it all a dream?—It was long before he

could collect his thoughts, and then they fled to his child. The proud, the haughty, the spotless name of Damerel was tainted; for his marriage was clearly incomplete—illegal! And his child!—he could not think of that; it was too dreadful. Yet it might be concealed—a Catholic marriage might yet be solemnized privately.

One thing Damerel determined on—it was, instantly to see Geraldine, and at any risk to break the whole to her.

It was Friday night; he went to her rooms and knocked—there was no answer. He went to the nursery—strange to say, the nurses were up.

"I was just coming to you, sir," said the head nurse; "for Master Damerel is very hot and restless."

- " Where is Lady Geraldine?"
- "Her Ladyship ordered no one to disturb her, sir, to-night, unless she rang."

Damerel ground his teeth.

- " Shall I send for Dr. N-, sir?"
- " By all means-directly."
- "Take me, papa," said the little boy, in his broken accents, stretching out his arms.
 - " What is it, my darling?-my treasure?"
 - " Hot, papa."
- "God bless you, my own !--poor little soul !" said Damerel, clasping it in his arms with a sort of shrinking anguish. "Send instantly, Mrs. Allenby."

At this moment there was a step on the stairs

—Damerel rushed out and faced—his wife!

- "Geraldine? What do you do here?"
- " I ?-I came to see what the moving about

was, at such an hour; and the child in your arms, with hardly a thing on? Good Heavens, William, it will catch its death!"

"Baby is not well—I have sent for Dr. N—," said Damerel, sternly. "As for you, Geraldine, go back to your room; in a few minutes I wish to speak to you."

Damerel saw Geraldine's cheek fade, and then the colour mounted to her temples.

- "What have you to say, William?"
- "Only to tell you Dr. N—'s opinion. Don't stay in the cold," said Damerel, changing his tone. His wife retired satisfied.
- "Any other mother," thought Damerel, bitterly, "would have remained by her child; but she—ah no!"

What a change had two nights effected in Damerel's worshipping heart! He now turned

from the beautiful deceiver, and clung, with fond and trembling anguish, to his helpless child.

Dr. N— was not tardy. He had been present at Geraldine's birth. He was a friend of the family, and his interest was proportionably great. He took the little child to the light, and saw it close, with a sharp cry, its pained eyelids.

"Measles, Mr. Damerel—no more; better early in life. The dear child is very strong; and having taken the disorder so soon, I have no doubt that it will pass off mildly. I think the warmer it is kept the better, and I'll call again to-morrow."

Damerel rocked the child in his arms till it fell asleep; and then went to Geraldine's room. She had thrown herself on her bed, and slept.

" Can she sleep?" thought the father, and he

bent over her. The long dark lashes were soaked in tears—the round childish cheek almost blistered—the deep peculiar red lip trembling still.

- "Geraldine!"
- "Not-not-not again!" cried Geraldine, starting up.
- "It is I," said Damerel, taking the small wrists, as she stretched out her hands. "Dr. N— has been."
 - "Oh, has he? what for?"
 - " "For our child. Rouse yourself."
- "I'm awake now. I remember; dear baby's got a cold, hasn't it?"
 - " No-the measles."
- "Goodness-how shocking! But I've had them, William!"
 - " I am glad of it," said Damerel, with a curl

of scorn. "And now, Geraldine, I am going to speak to you—of yourself. Now I want no tears—no scenes; the subject is far too serious."

Geraldine quivered from head to foot; but she was awed for once.

- "You have deceived me!" cried the husband, bursting into an ungovernable rage. "You never saw me angry before. Geraldine, had an angel from heaven told me the scene I was to witness in your own private room last night, I could not have credited it. Silence! I cannot command myself if you speak. I will not hear that voice—treacherous! perjured Geraldine!"
- "Oh, great Heaven!" gasped Geraldine, "have mercy; for I am not so bad as that! In pity tell me—who told you this?"
- "None!" cried the fiery, enraged husband.

 "I heard—saw—I judged for myself. I saw

the creature I had chosen from a world of perfections—I saw her for whom I had given up—"

- "Spare me there," said Geraldine, hoarsely.
- "I saw you kneel at a mortal's feet! I heard you—the pure, the sinless, the spotless—confess! Geraldine! Geraldine!"

Damerel hid his face, in an agony of mingled grief and tenderness.

- "I am lost!" sobbed Geraldine. It was a tearless sob—she could not weep.
- "No; I can forgive," said Damerel, sternly.
- "I can forgive yet! You can repair the fault."
- "Never—never! Tell me, in mercy, what did I confess; for it was by compulsion!"
- "I heard you say—would that I had been dead to hearing!—that you did not love me as you ought. Your altar vow, too, made in the conviction that a priest, a man, a mortal, could give you—for the breaking—Absolution!"

- "Never, as I hope to live! William, I never medita—thought that! What, was that all you heard?"
 - "Yes. Was there more to hear?"
- "No-no-no-indeed not! But-we spoke an hour after that."
- "During which, your shocked—your horrified husband, was senseless!"
 - "God forgive me!"
- "You may well say that! And now for reparation. I am glad to see you can feel."

Geraldine looked numbed—frozen. Her eyes were a dead, opaque blue; and the vein in her forehead starting in relief against the transparent skin, until even she looked fearful, only made Damerel more severe.

- "You are a Roman Catholic?"
- " It is true."

- "You have been married in my religion;—
 now I am ignorant of all points of law. I know
 not whether this marriage is legal."
 - "Oh, William!"
- "I know not whether, were the right of succession to my estates disputed, my child—our only one—would be deemed—it is a dreadful thought—legitimate!"

Geraldine fell forwards on the bed, with a heavy groan.

- " That infant is ill—it may—"
- "Hush—spare its mother!" cried the young wife; "do not breathe that awful probability!"
- "I do not blame you for your religion—you were brought up abroad—you chose it yourself; but I blame you for the deception. Yet I forgive you; though you might have told me, Geraldine! Now I insist, as some compensation,

that any one you choose—I care not who—shall, without one moment's unnecessary delay, privately marry us in your faith?"

- " Shocking—dreadful !" murmured Geraldine.
- "If you do not consent, we part for ever!

 Now, your answer?"
 - " Be it so."
 - " What? which?"
- "Oh William can you ask? ah you can feel now!"

Damerel stood with his hands clenched on his forehead, Geraldine with her head leaning on her knees.

- " Leave me, now," said she.
- "I wish you good night," said her husband calmly. Yes, he was calm, for his anger was appeased, and the storm of passion had exhausted itself.

"Good night," said Geraldine; and he closed the door.

The rest of that night was passed by Danierel at the bedside of his child; and the next day, unknown to all save Guido and three priests, the second ceremony was gone through.

CHAPTER XIX.

Time past. Mr. and Lady Geraldine Damerel went to their seat for the autumn, and Lord and Lady Hopeville went abroad. It was at Lausanne that Isabel became the mother of a little girl—a fragile being, who just learnt to love her, and then died! Isabel was not proof against this blow—her child had lived six months—it had lived to welcome her step with open arms—it had lived to know her—it died! The General felt it deeply, but his grief seemed more for his wife than his child—he saw her

bitter anguish, and he bent his whole mind to consolation. He was a changed man when they returned to England, after an absence of a year and a half, and Isabel was also changed. She re-entered society, and was surrounded by admiration, at the time of all others when she would have shunned it. Isabel now lived upon more equal terms with her husband; there was a mutual interchange of feelings and thoughts; and, on his side, a constant wish to give her pleasure, and make up for the loss she had sustained.

Their first evening in England was spent at her mother's, where they only found two gentlemen, Mr. Fanshaw, an M.P., and Colonel Huntly, of old.

Fanny and Isabel sat on a window ledge together; the General sat on Mrs. Seyton's

sofa, and the other gentlemen were in another room.

- "Isabel is much improved," said Mrs. Seyton;

 there is no comparison in her appearance to what she was when she went abroad."
- "She is perfection!" said Lord Hopeville, warmly; "I never knew any one equal to her—I would trust her with my soul!—and she has been called very pretty too."
- "Isabel has expression," said the mother, affectionately; "and I ought to thank you, Lord Hopeville, for having preserved that pure, calm, happy smile."
- "It is her own sweet temper, ma'am," said the General.
- "Fanny, dear," said Lady Hopeville," where are the Damerels?"
 - "They came to town last week; Geraldine

called once, and sent the little boy next day: such a glorious child, in a purple velvet frock and ostrich plumes."

- "It promised to be beautiful—is she very fond of it?"
- "No; I never thought she had any domestic affections. She thinks if it has three nurses, she has done her duty; and do you know, Isabel, they say, they are not at all a happy couple."
 - " Oh, Fanny!"
- "So the world says—they seldom appear in public together; and the other morning, as I was walking in the Park, I met Mr. Damerel running after the child's hoop—without any servants."
 - " Did you speak?"
- "Yes, I asked after Geraldine; and he said very carelessly, 'I daresay she is very well, but

I seldom see her before two o'clock,' and then he told me he always took the child out in the morning, before his Parliamentary duties."

- "What is the little boy's name, for I declare I don't know, Fanny?"
 - " Chester Damerel."
 - " And not-"
 - " Not William; she said she hated the name."
- "How strange!" said Isabel; if Heaven blessed me with a son, I should be so proud to call it Hugh!"
- "Ah, so should I, so would any one who loved her husband. What a dear face the General has !—how I hated him once!"
- "My dear girl, there never was such a husband; but you, Fanny,—we must find a 'sposo' for you some day?"

Fanny laughed and coloured deeply.

- "Tell me, Fanny dear—we never had any secrets—is there any one—"
 - "I don't know, Isabel-I-"
 - " My dearest sister, now don't be so silly."
 - "But Isabel, I'm not sure -"
 - " Never mind; I am not a tell-tale."
 - "Well, in the room;" whispered Fanny.
 - "Good Heavens! what! Colonel Huntly?"
- "Oh, no, no! how ridiculous!—but that dark young man, he's always here, and mamma thinks—I don't know I'm sure—"
 - "Mr. Fanshaw? Who is he, dearest?"
- "Member for Lincoln, heir to a baronetcy, only son of Sir Mark Fanshaw—good family, you see; but be sure you don't hint, Isabel—"
 - " Not for worlds; has he proposed?"
- "Not quite; he told me to-night, just before you came, that he was going out of town; and

that coming back soon, and indeed going at all, depended on another person; then he looked at me I think—I'm not sure, but I think I felt his eyes."

- "Then it is a decided thing, Fanny," laughed Isabel; "when my little merry sister feels the eyes of a visitor in that manner, his cause is safe!"
 - " I didn't say I would have him !"
- "Oh, no, of course you will not think of it!" laughed Isabel again.
- "My dear," said the General, "I fear we must go; the carriage is come."
- "I'm sure we have not been an hour," said Isabel, smiling.
- "Just three; however, I can order it again if you like."
- "Oh, no, thank you, Hugh; but I know you don't like keeping the horses."

- "That is of no consequence—but Miss Seyton, are you not engaged to dine with us to-morrow after the Horticultural?"
 - "Yes; Isabel asks me."
- "And we want an escort sadly, for Lord Hopeville is engaged. Colonel Huntly, will you accept a seat in the carriage?" said Isabel.
 - " With the greatest pleasure."
- "Everhard, you are not going, you say; therefore," said Lady Hopeville, with her sweet friendly smile, "might I offer you the vacant seat, Mr. Fanshaw?"

Fanny blushed with pleasure at her sister's kind management, and Mr. Fanshaw gave an eager assent.

- "Do you know Fanshaw well, my dear?" said Lord Hopeville, as they drove home.
 - "Oh, no, Hugh, I never saw him before

to-night; but I strongly suspect the fête would have been very dull to Fanny without him."

- " Ha! my Isabel a match-maker!"
- "Ah, Hugh, only for my dear sister! I hope you did not mind?"
- "Not I; I never mind what you do, Isabel; for if the action is at fault, the motive is good.

 Ask him to dinner if you like."
- "Thank you a thousand times, Hugh; Mr. Fanshaw seems very agreeable."
- "If he were but a Tory," said the General, with a smile.

The next day Isabel drove her sister and the two gentlemen to Chiswick, and prudently took Colonel Huntly's arm, whilst Fanny followed, looking very pretty in her white net hat and roses, with Mr. Fanshaw.

"As they walked through the grounds, Isa-vol. II.

bel's train augmented considerably, and at last a gentleman of the party said—

"There is that lovely creature again!"

Isabel followed the direction of his eyes; her own fell on a very young woman, drest in a pale lilac satin pelisse, an open chip hat, and two long drooping feathers, one of which had caught up a bunch of the long clustering ringlets which lay in all their sunny luxuriance on the pure but brilliant cheek; she was, indeed lovely; her sparkling teeth were exhibiting most fully between the full red lips, and her large fearless blue eyes met, though they never sought, each gaze of admiration. Isabel stopped involuntarily.

- "Geraldine! surely I am not forgotten?"
- "Isabel! dear Isabel! as if such a thing were possible!—how long have you been here?

when did you arrive in England?—how is dear old—I mean my old friend, Lord Hopeville?—don't leave me!—thank you, Lord Cecil, I will take my cousin's arm—Isabel! how strange I did not know you; but then you are so improved!—now talk, 'cugina!'"

- "The moment you give me leave," smiled Isabel; and having answered all the questions, she asked after Mr. Damerel.
- "William?—oh, very well, thank you;—and the little boy?—quite well—such a great boy—but how do you like me?—am I at all altered?"
 - " No, Geraldine, not for the worst."
- "Heigho! don't compliment me, for I am so sick of it; these people bore me so. Come home and dine with me, there's a good soul?"
- "I'm engaged, Geraldine; Fanny and some gentlemen dine with us."

- "With us? ah, you dear domestic Isabel! that us was so like you! Come and see me—see us to-morrow?"
- "When I visit, it is to me, not us," said Lady Hopeville, smiling. "I will be with you early; good bye."
- "Fanny, are you ready to leave the garden, my dear?"
 - "Oh yes, Isabel; quite."
- "Is all right?" whispered Isabel to her smiling, sparkling sister.
 - " All right, and I am happy!"
- "God bless you, dear girl!" murmured Isabel.

Fanny had accepted Mr. Fanshaw, and there was no fuss, no trouble, no half-rejection, no shy putting off. Mr. Fanshaw was a quick, hasty, clever, young man; he had said abruptly,

when he found himself alone with Fanny: "My dear Miss Seyton, I am a very bad hand at a speech; you can guess what I have to say; you are the only person—help me out, pray!"

- "I don't know what you want me to say," said Fanny, in a very low voice.
- "Promise that when I broach a certain subject to your father, you will aid my cause; will you, dear Miss Seyton?"
 - "Very well," said Fanny, inaudibly.
 - "You said yes?" said Fanshaw, eagerly.
 - "Yes," replied Fanny, and there it ended. Isabel called the next day on Geraldine.
- "Her ladyship is out, but particularly hoped Lady Hopeville would wait for her."

Isabel went up into the drawing-room and sat down. She had not been there long before the door flew open.

"Go in, Master Damerel, and be good, there's a pretty young gentleman," said the nurse.

Isabel started forwards. At the door, with one little finger in his mouth, stood the noble creature which called Geraldine "mother!"

- "You lovely boy!" exclaimed Isabel, "is this really little Master Damerel!"
- "Yes, my lady," said Mrs. Allenby, "but he can look much better; he has been unwell lately—rather feverish, my lady."
 - "Will you come to me, darling?"
- "You're not mamma! Where is mamma? she said she was coming to-day;" said the child, turning his wide wild eyes gravely on Isabel.
- "Mamma is coming—kiss me, dear!" said Isabel, and Chester's little arms clasped themselves round her neck. When she looked up,

Mrs. Allenby had quitted the room, and a gentleman stood there. In the thin, aged, melancholy and haggard being before her, Isabel hardly recognized the once gay, happy, and handsome William Damerel!

- "Isabel once more!—how glad I am to see you! How are you—and the General?"
- "We are both quite well, thank you. What an angel this child is!"
- "It is a treasure—my only one! how is your's?"
- "I have none!" said Isabel, and a silent tear rushed to her eyes, and hung on the curled lash."
- "Papa, why does she cry?" said, the little boy; "did you make her unhappy?"
- "Isabel, forgive me! I knew it not!" said

 Damerel. "We all have our sorrows, and I--

I am not unchastened. Have you seen Geraldine?"

"Not to-day: yesterday we met at Chiswick.

I am now waiting for her."

"Chiswick?—yes!" said Damerel, bitterly.

"She was there when this dear boy was pronounced, by Dr. N——, to be very feverish; and whenever this is the case, for Chester is very delicate, I am his nurse! Yes! at Chiswick! at a fête, when she has not been in her nursery this whole week!"

"Why doesn't mamma come?" said the child; "where is she?"

"You may well ask!" said the father scorn-fully; "my poor neglected darling, you may well ask for your un——"

"Hush! William—before your child!" said
Isabel, suddenly—then remembering what she

: .. . • . • . •

said, her whole face crimsoned with confusion.

"Pm very sorry," said Damerel; "but sometimes it wears my patience out. I can't bear it! I forget what I say! I am worried, harrassed, worn to death!"

He looked it! Lady Geraldine came not,—
so Isabel went home.

- "Where's Mr. Damerel?" said Lady Geraldine, when she came home.
 - " In the nursery, my lady."
- "The nursery!—what nonsense! Has Lady Hopeville been here?"
 - "Yes, my lady, and waited some time."
 - "In this room?"
- "Yes, my lady, with Master Damerel and master."
- "Oh, stay, Rosalie; ask your master to speak to me."

The maid soon returned.

- "Master would be glad if you would go to the nursery, my lady, as he cannot leave Master Damerel."
- "Such stuff," muttered Geraldine, as she toiled upstairs; "men have no business in the nursery. Well, William, what in the world do you want now?"
 - "You are late, my dear; very late."
- "Don't pretend you missed me," said the cross but beautiful voice; "what do you want with me?"
- "I'm sure Chester is ill; just look at the dear child's cheeks!"
- "I suppose you and Isabel have just been romping with him, and then wonder at his having a colour. Chester, dear!"
 - "Mamma is here, my precious;" said Dame-

rel, bending over the heavy child, whose full white lids hung languidly over the deep lustrous eyes.

- "Chester, darling, what is it?" said the mother, now half frightened.
- "I'm sleepy, mamma I and thirsty, and so hot."
- "Good God, he's very ill!" exclaimed Damerel. Dr. N—— is very remiss."
- "Now, William, do be rational, and don't make such a fuzz,—the child was not very bad when I went out."
- "It was far from well, Geraldine; I told you so. It has rapidly got worse."
- "You are always fancying one thing or another, William. I'm sure it's only a cold. What is the hour?"
 - "Just six."

- "Don't forget the dinner at A-- House."
- "Good heaven, Geraldine! do you mean you could go out when our child is ill?"
- "I don't see much the matter with it; for of course if I did I should be just as anxious as you. But the Duke made such a point of our meeting the Hopevilles."
 - "Do as you please," replied Damerel.
 - " And you?"
- "I, Lady Geraldine, have still a heart! My child is of more value than the opinion of a thousand dukes, and no power on earth should make me leave him when there is no one but me to soothe his little sorrows—poor soul!"

And Damerel clasped the child to his breast, whilst he sealed his lips on the burning brow. Geraldine coloured—hesitated—paused—and then left the room—to dress for the dinner-party!

- "Tell me the truth," said Damerel, wildly, when the family doctor arrived; "what is the matter with Chester?"
- "My little friend had the measles two years ago," said Dr. N—, "or I should be inclined —indeed I fear—"
 - " Tell me the worst, doctor !"
- "To-morrow I will call again early, and decide. This may be cold."
 - " It is not that," said Damerel, sadly.
- " Don't alarm yourself, Mr. Damerel. You are too anxious."
- "Remember, doctor, my life is wrapped up in this child."
- "I know it. However, with your permission,
 I will now go and calm Lady Geraldine."
- "I—I'm very sorry," stammered Damerel;
 "but—but my wife—is—out.".

- "Out!" said Dr. N-, glancing at his patient.
- "Yes," said the husband, colouring; "we had a very pressing engagement, and I—I would not allow her to confine herself to a sick-room; so—I—I—made her—reluctantly—fulfil it."

Damerel had a sofa wheeled to his child's bedside, and there he remained, till the thundering announcement of Geraldine's return roused him.

"Nurse," said he, starting round, "ask Lady Geraldine to speak to me; and order that confounded knocker to be tied up."

Geraldine came up.

- "Really. William, you should be more considerate. This is the second time you have dragged me up these stairs this day!"
- "Chester has my hand in his, and I dared not move, for fear of waking him, Geraldine. But I have seen Dr. N.—."

- "And what did he say, my dear. Pray, be quick; I'm so fagged."
 - "He didn't say; but the child is very ill."
- "Well, my dear William, I'm sure we are doing all in our power. We can do no more, you know, than doctor it, dear thing. Do'you know, the King has offered Lord Hopeville the embassy to Russia!—Isabel——"
- "You will distract me, Geraldine! What do I care for these things?"
 - "But Isabel declared she-"
- "Hang Isabel! Geraldine, go to bed, for God's sake—those diamonds dazzle the child; he is awake."
- "Chester, love?" said the beautiful mother, touching the crimson cheek with her cool bright lips; "are you awake, my pet?"
- "Go away, naughty mamma!" said the little boy, passionately.

"Ah, you're the best nurse, after all, 'sposo mio.' Good night; I'm half dead."

An hour past away, and the child fell asleep again. Damerel went to his uneasy rest; and the house was once more quiet.

The next morning, the child was not worse, though still heavy and languid.

- "Geraldine," said Damerel, when she made her appearance, "what engagements have you to-day?"
- "Only, Almack's to-night. I was going out to Richmond; but—"
- "Pray give that up, and stay at home this morning; for I am obliged to attend a meeting, and then comes on the debate in the House."
- "I don't think I can; because I promised to take Isabel to look for a house."
 - " Any other day will do, and Chester-"

- "Chester is better, William; and Allenby is with him."
- "Allenby is not like you—a mother is indispensable in sickness. Lady Hopeville will excuse you to-day, I'm sure."
- "But I've a thousand things to do, my dear William; and Isabel is to call here for me."
- "Now Geraldine," said Damerel, firmly, "I am sometimes roused to be decided. This day I positively insist on your staying at home; and I give you the best of reasons,—I wish to hear from your lips what Dr. N— says."
 - "You insist, do you?" said the wife.
- "I do; and, moreover, if you refuse to comply, I am prepared to enforce."
- "I should like to see it!" cried Lady Geraldine. "I must say I should like to see it!—
 What? insist upon my doing any thing I don't choose?"

- " Even so," said Damerel, carelessly.
- "Very well!" cried Geraldine, "then I tell you fairly I will not!"
- "And I tell you fairly, Lady Geraldine, that, until Isabel comes, I shall take my seat here in your room, and tell her the truth."
- "Do," cried Geraldine; "I don't mind. I allow you to remain!"
- "Thank you," said Damerel; and he took his seat. About eleven, Isabel was announced.
 - "I'm not ready, Isa," pouted Geraldine.
- "Never mind, I can wait. How is dear little Chester?"
- "Not at all worse; but why don't you ask me why I'm not dressed?"
 - "Why?" said Isabel, rather astonished.
- "Ask him there!" cried Geraldine, starting up. Damerel laughed. "Ask him. He pre-

tends to declare I am not to go out with you today! The idea—the very idea of his beginning to command!"

- "It's high time, I think," said Damerel, rising calmly; "but allow me to explain. Lady Hopeville, our little boy is very far from well; and as my duties call me away this morning, I request my wife to stay with him. She refuses, because engaged to you; but will you kindly excuse her?"
- " Certainly—most assuredly," said Isabel, quite confused and distressed.
- " No you shall not," cried Geraldine. "You will put me in a passion, Mr. Damerel, and then you will be sorry for it!"
 - " No, Geraldine, that time is past."
- " I will go out; and if Isabel won't go with me, I'll go alone."

- "My dear, I'm going down to Long Acre in the barouche," said Damerel.
 - "Then I'll have the chariot."
 - " Hobson has got that."
- "I will not stay at home," cried the spoilt and petted beauty, bursting into tears.
- "Dear, dear Geraldine," whispered Isabel, whose feelings were beyond description at this scene, "comply quietly."
- "I will not, to please him!" sobbed Geraldine.
- "I must go, Lady Hopeville;" said Damerel,
 "but I trust that you, knowing what a wife's
 duty is, will allow Geraldine to obey me. Goodbye Geraldine, I am very sorry if I've—"
- "Go away," said Geraldine, "I can't bear the sound of your voice!"
- "I'm glad of it," said Damerel; and he left the room.

"Thank Heaven!" thought Isabel, "I was not this man's wife."

There was a long pause.

- "Come up to baby, or must you go?" said Geraldine.
- "No; I will send away the carriage, and sit with you if you like."
- "Thank you, Isabel—you really are a kind creature, after all."

The baby was asleep. The cousins took a seat one on each side of the little cot.

- "I wish I had not cried," said Geraldine, peevishly, "because it made that man so triumphant."
- "But my dear girl," said Isabel, "you really should obey your husband, for husbands have such power if they choose to exert it!"
 - " No, William has not any-he is very much

afraid of me generally, but lately he has changed."

- "Are you sure, Geraldine, the change is not in you?"
- "Quite sure—does the General ever laugh in that horrible way when you quarrel with him?"
 - "We never quarrel," said Isabel.
- "Then he has a good temper, I dare say; because I am as peaceable a person as ever lived—I am as obedient as possible, until—"
 - "You are contradicted," smiled Isabel.
- "No, it's all William—he is such a cold, insipid, provoking creature."
- "Dear Geraldine don't say that, when he idolizes you so."
- "I doubt it—besides, how should you know him so well as I do? he is not as he was when he was a lover, I assure you."

- " No man is," said Isabel, unmoved.
- "Well, to give you a proof of his sour temper, he yesterday, when I was speaking of you, said 'hang Isabel.'"

The dart was powerless—the shaft fell harmless. Isabel smiled with the greatest unconcern, and answered kindly—

"Those things should not be remembered, dear Geraldine, for we none of us know what we say when annoyed—your dear child's illness is enough to make Mr. Damerel very—uneasy."

CHAPTER XX.

Ir was a dreadful moment. It was midnight—in the nursery, crowded round the little bed, stood three nurses, the physician, and the father of the suffering child who lay gasping feebly on it. Danierel was standing the picture of agonized despair, and his starting eyes dured hardly turn to meet the infant look of anguish which fell from the child.

Calm yourself, my dear friend, said Dr.

Note: compassionately, whilst the remains there is yet hope."

"Hope! I have no hope!" cried the father, wildly, "my God have mercy! spare my child!" and he fell on the pillow overcome,—overpowered with the weight of sudden and unprepared affliction. Little Chester had been better all day and evening; but at night, during his father's anxious watch, he had roused himself in an agony of oppression on his little chest. Damerel brought lights, and called the nurses—the child's whole once lovely face was scarlet! Dr. N—was instantly summoned, a sudden change had taken place—the only son—the only child, was in danger. An hour more—two hours—and it was pronounced beyond hope.

- "Do not call her Ladyship," said Dr. N——to Allenby.
 - " My Lady's out, sir," said the nurse sternly.
 - "Tell Lady Geraldine, gently," said Dr. Vol. II.

N-, kindly, "the change has been sudden, this is a case of suppressed small-pox."

" Is it infectious?" said Damerel.

"Very, I do not think Lady G. ever had it; therefore, pray entreat, implore her for your sake, my dear friend, to refrain from visiting my poor little patient; it can do no good, alas!"

"Alas!" echoed Damerel, with a groan of intense grief; he could not speak—he only wished to be left alone with his child.

Damerel, exhausted and wretched as he was, half slumbered for some time, and only started up when Chester groaned—the nurses were both asleep. On his knee was a slip of paper: he read—

"Good night, dear William. I am glad you are resting. I did not look at dear Chester for fear of waking you.

"G. DAMEREL."

"Then she has returned," and I never heard her," said Damerel to himself." "I'll go, poor, poor girl! she little knows..."

Damerel went 'to his room, and changed every article of his dress for fear of infection,' and then proceeded to his wife's room.

Geraldine lay on the sofa, still dressed, but sound asleep; — her faultless figure, in its most costly dress—her bright beautiful hair bound back by a double row of diamonds—her snowy arms glittering with jewels—all formed a perfect pleture, but it was not on them that the sorrowing husband gazed—it was on the round pure check—the full, proud and smiling lip—the long curling lashes—the bright, open, unsunned, glorious brow.

Geraldine had never looked more attractive!

—more unconsciously beautiful.

Canada (d. c)

Damerel hesitated what to do; he shuddered.

- "I must wake her. Geraldine!"

 Still she slept.
- "Geraldine!" and he gently took ber hand.
 She rose.
 - " William?-why-what's the matter?"
- "Don't—be—frightened," stammered Damerel; "but Dr. N.—I came to tell you—Geraldine, in one word, Chester is worse!"
- "Worse!" cried Geraldine; "why was I not called—sent for? What is it, in mercy? William, why are you so awfully agitated? Tell me, or I shall die!"
 - "The disorder—"
 - "Good Heavens! What?"
 - "Is—the small-pox; and—"
 - "The small-pox! Oh, William!"
 - " And our child-that link that made me

love you more than you deserved—that tie that drew me more fondly—alas, 'more weakly—to-wards you, is going!"

- " Small-pox!" murmured Geraldine, struck with dismay; " that dreadful, fearful disorder!

 I never had it! William! William!"
- "What?—are you afraid?" said Damerel; glancing, with ill-repressed scorn, at the blanched cheek.
- "I—I never had it " cried Geraldine, wildly; "and if my child should be all marked—
 spoilt for life—that little angel face! And—
 and I—oh, I dare not stay in the house!" and
 the young mother buried her face in her hands.
- "I thought it! I knew it! Vain, heartless, selfish, hapless creature!" cried Damerel.

Geraldine heard him not.

"Our child-my son-is dying!" he con-

tinued, stamping his foot on the ground. "Geraldine! be at least a woman! Feel for your child!"

"My poor baby!" sobbed Geraldine. "Oh
William, is this a time to be harsh?"

"And you have no motherly wish to see it?
—to bid it farewell?—to soothe the struggling spirit? Geraldine, I could have thought many things, but not this!"

"I dare not," articulated Geraldine, hoarsely.

"My horror of the disease is beyond control.

I am no longer able to feel. Take care, William, or you will drive me mad! I must go away! I care not where; but I cannot brave that scourge!"

Damerel looked at her. He gazed at the faultless loveliness—he gazed at the spotless purity of that face—and he, even he, dreaded the scourge.

THE BAST GERALDINE.

"" Go'!" said he, in a voice of contempt, and stiffled grief! "Go, Geraldine!" I dare not—cannot bid you stay!"

11 let Where 2n cried Geraldine. 17

"Isabel," inuttered Damerel, and left the

The next morning, Geraldine actually became an immate of Isabel's bruse!

That day passed, and there were constant messengers passing between the houses, when, about six in the evening, a note was handed to Isabel, as she sat working by her husband's side, it was as follows:—

"I know not what I am asking, dear Lady Hopeville; but, distracted by grief, I implore you to tell me if you would mind seeing my child for one moment: it is just alive! Yours,

" Wm. Damnreg."

" What can be mean?" s

" He must wish me to go, as I have had the disorder, a you will allow it?"

" It is most strange."

"The whole case is stran band; but being one of lift Hugh, you will not surely hes.

"Go, my dearest," said the have to call at the Club, and Carlton Gardens."

"Thank you a thousand tine and she flew to Geraldine to to You will be with him—you

for that is impossible in But stay; Isabel, take core of diffection literature of diffection literature. Geraldine Physics

Isabel entered the darkened chamber." William Damerel sat by the cot, with his fade hidden in his hands.

But I! I have never had it Police to a

- "Mr. Damerel, I am here," said she, softly:
- "God bless you, Isabel," was all he raplied; but he did not move.
- "Let me take your place," said Isabel, "you are worn out,"
- "Come here," said Damerel, and he led her to the cot, and drew saids the curtains. The little boy was extended there, gasping faintly. A pale blue circle was round its little lips. His dark blue eyes, full and languid, fixed themselves

on Isabel, whose tears fell fast and thick as she bent over him.

- "Chester! speak, my own!" said the father, with a burst of anguish.
 - "William!" exclaimed Isabel, "be calm!"
- "Mamma! my own mamma!" said the faint voice, "kiss me with your dear cold lips, mamma!"
- "How dreadful to hear this!" cried Dame-rel; "how awful to see that sweet face so changed! Oh, my child, have I deserved this chastening!"

Isabel placed her arms gently round the little boy, and raised him to her whilst she pressed her lips on his forehead. All the memories of her own child's deathbed rose to her sight, and Isabel even wept!

"I do love you now, mamma, mamma!" moaned the child, in a faint voice.

"Heaven preserve my senses!" said Damerel, instantly aware that a change—a last change was approaching, "to think that the innocent creature calls its mother, and she is not here!"

"Hush!" said Isabel, "he does not know it is not her. Mrs. Allenby, suppose you bathe these poor little hot temples—have you can de Cologne or vinegar?"

"Alas, my lady," said the old nurse, whilst heavy tears rolled down her cheek, "it's little good now!"

"Oh, not so near! don't say it!" cried Isabel.

" If master would but rouse," said Allenby.

Isabel looked at Damerel; it was shocking to see him. His eyes seemed starting from his head, and his bloodless lips were contracted and convulsed. Isabel's fortitude and strength of

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- " Is it infectious?" said Damerel.
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"Alas!" echoed Damerel, with a groan of intense grief; he could not speak—he only wished to be left alone with his child.

Damerel, exhausted and wretched as he was, half slumbered for some time, and only started up when Chester groaned—the nurses were both asleep. On his knee was a slip of paper: he read—

"Good night, dear William. I am glad you are resting. I did not look at dear Chester for fear of waking you.

"G. DAMEREL."

THE LADY GERALDINE.

"Oh, if mester would but go!" sobbed Mrs.
Allenby.

"Never mind now?" whispered Isabel, choaked with tears; "it is over?" (and the second of the

She turned to Damerel. It was a monicht of mortal weakness; one sob burst from him—that dreadful thing—a man's sole!

"Released;", replied Isabel, "at peace; Wile!

Lady Hopeville heard her husband's knock about ten minutes after, and joined him him stantly. They were both silent for some pades.

Isabel at last raised her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Ab, my dearest," said the General; "I amz

"So am I now," said Isabel; "but it was a

most afflicting scene—poor, poor William Damerel!"

- "Then it is really over?"
- "Oh yes, alas! I am glad I was there, for he had no more fortitude than the poor child itself. How shall I tell Geraldine, for she is certainly quite unprepared for the news!"
- "Go to her as you are," said Lord Hopeville, as the lamp at his door flashed on Isabel's tear-stained countenance; "your appearance will tell the sad tale the soonest."
- "I must entirely change my dress first," said Isabel, "for she dreads infection so terribly."
 - "What a mother!" sighed Lord Hopeville.
- "But she has been brought up to think that lovely face her all," extenuated Isabel, ever anxious to shield her cousin from blame.
- "Well, I only hope this event will be of some service to her," said the General.

When Lady Hopeville entered her cousin's room, Geraldine sat reading in one corner of the room. She was intent upon the "Book of Beauty" I and never noticed Isabel's appearance.

- "Geraldine?" said Lady Hopeville, gravely.
- "Ah! Isabel!—well, and what did he want?
- -how's Chester?"

Isabel was silent.

- "Good gracious, Isabel; aurely, oh surely, my darling is not worse!"
- "However painful the duty, Geraldine, I must perform it and prepare you—"
- "He is worse!" cried Geraldine, impetuously.

 "I want no preparation!—my poor little Chester!—but what did William say?"
 - "Your husband is naturally—"
- "Weak," said Geraldine; "don't tell me what he said; tell me Dr. N.'s opinion; surely small-pox is never fa—fa—fatal!"

tinued, stamping his foot on the ground. "Geraldine! be at least a woman! Feel for your child!"

"My poor baby!" sobbed Geraldine. "Oh William, is this a time to be harsh?"

"And you have no motherly wish to see it?
—to bid it farewell?—to soothe the struggling spirit? Geraldine, I could have thought many things, but not this!"

"I dare not," articulated Geraldine, hoarsely.

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Damerel looked at her. He gazed at the faultless loveliness—he gazed at the spatiess purity of that face—and he, even he, dreaded the scourge.

- "Happy—" Gerâldine seemed stifled, her eyes were fixed—" it is not d—dead!"
 - " Alas, it is !"
 - " A-a dream-"
 - " No, Geraldine; it is a sad reality!" ... ".
- "Death could not come so—so near—it—
 yes! it is a dream!"
- "It is no dream, dearest! Geraldine, rouse yourself; your child is gone; you have lost it—for ever!"
- "A—a dream?" sighed Geraldine, sinking slowly back; her lips moved, and a smothered groan escaped.

The mother had fainted.

CHAPTER XXI.

- "I TRUST, Isabel, you are prepared for the drawing-room, on the thirtieth?" said Lord Hopeville to his wife, one day.
- "Indeed I am not, Hugh. I have not even thought of my dress."
- "Then I must have been very remiss, and have forgotten to tell you; you must be there with me?"
- "You told me a month ago, my dearest; but, for once, Isabel has rebelled!"
 - "It must be the year of the comet," smiled

Lord Hopeville, affectionately; "or what has occasioned the miracle?"

- "Don't-don't speak so kindly!" said his wife; "for it breaks my heart!"
- "What a brittle heart, Isa,—to break at the idea of a drawing-room ["]
- "It is not that, Hugh; but it is the dreadful, the unfeeling idea of going to court to thank the king for separating us.! To go in all my plumes, and smiles, and diamonds, with the words of bumble gratitude on my tongue and misery in my heart! Oh, that there were no Russia in the world! Hateful and herrid place! Hugh, I must go with you!"
- "No, my love; I cannot allow you to brave a Ressian winters?"...
- "But I am so fond of cold; and Petersburgh surely has warm, houses? Hugh, I will go with you!"

"It is the journey, my dear Isabel, and there are no ladies in the embassy."

"But I am so fond of travelling; and as to ladies, have I not you?"

"Well! I don't think I'm much like a lady,
Isa:—upon my word, I never heard that before!"

The General stooped, and looked in Isabel's downcast face. She was vexed with herself for laughing. She met the glance of his eyes beneath the wide brow, the thick, dark, clustering hair. She saw the curl of his mild but firm and moustached lip. No; the General was like anything in the world but a lady.

Don't laugh, Hugh; or I shall think you don't mind leaving me!"

"Nay, then I'm serious; but, remember, Isa, it is a duty you owe me, to testify your gratitude to his Majesty for the advancement of your husband!"

then. I am sure I shall; and then, Hugh, you will see your wife making herself, according to the code of the heartless world, ridiculous! Oh, I think I can never stay behind! and yet they envy me your distinction!"

"Were it the envoy's wife is no mean title."
"Were it the emperor's wife!" cried Isabel;
"the title would be mean in comparison to that of
Lord Hopeville's—of the General's wife! which
dear humble sound will now die in the stately,
pompous, hateful term, 'your excellency!"

"The more we argue, the farther we get from the point. Here are crowds of people asking you to stay with them for the summer. There is your mother, at Dover."

"No—I shall bury myself, if I must be left behind. I can't think steadily."

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"Good night, dear William. I am glad you are resting. I did not look at dear Chester for fear of waking you.

"G. DAMEREL."

- "I hate that word, Isa."
- "Well—acquiescence, then. Shall I tell Geraldine I will come after—after—"
- "No-say we will come with pleasure; and then I can leave you there. Are you sure this arrangement is agreeable to you, Isabel?"
- "Oh yes, Hugh—anything," said Isabel, in a tone of languid sorrow. "I don't care at all what becomes of me!"
- "I wish," said Lord Hopeville, sadly; "I wish I could hear you speak less despairingly, Isa?"
- "I cannot, Hugh. I can only say, God grant we may meet again!"

Lord Hopeville silently passed his hand over his eyes, and the stern lip trembled for an instant; and then, rising, he left the room.

"There goes the best husband that ever wo-

man was blest with !" sighed Isabel, as she prepared to write to Geraldine, and accept the invitation into Northumberland for the remainder of the year.

The morning came when Isabel was to accompany her husband to Court for the last time. She went—the young Viscountess went in all her calm stately grace. And when on the arm of her tall, stern, martial husband, whose firm, erect figure contrasted widely with the alim, yielding attitudes of Isabel, they seemed almost an ill-assorted pair.

Isabel stood before the throne of her Sovereign—her curtsey lower even than usual—her swimming eyes fixed on the ground—her drooping plumes overshadowing her pale forehead.

The King took her hands with affable kindness, and remarked, as he half raised her,—

""I am very happy "Lady Hopeville, that we have been able to make my General the new; Envey; you would not go to Russia, I hear? "Alas, your Majesty, I may not," replied Isabel,—"or I would, willingly." with the terms of the second of the sec

May not? whay not? Why? Who said so?" My husband, sire." - 10 - 10 - 10 - 10 ** Ah! very good," smiled the King; and then he hurghedy distle thinking the misery that laugh caused; -- "then we must take care of you. here, Lady Hopeville, we must loften see you. and but some of the Pass on."

- "How did I behave?" said Isabel, breathlessly, number white whose the presence, note above hasbandi et settenaren tattera bezettena eta garantziare

"Admirably, my descet and did not think you would have borne it half on well affis Majesty was affable. In the control of the least state of the majesty was affable. In the control of the contro "When he laughed," said Isabel, "I all bu burst into tears!"

It was a beautiful evening in September when Lord and Lady Hopeville and suite drow up the rich avenues to the stately mansion called Castle Damerel. Isabel had never seen it—she did not know what to feel; but she certainly was lost in admiration when they drove up to the magnificent entrance.

- " What a gateway !" said Isabel.
- "It only wants a coronet," smiled the Viscount.

Geraldine flew into the hall to meet them and Damerel was close behind her. Isabel was struck with the improvement in both of them Geraldine had thrown off her mourning, and appeared in the colour which made her look as lovely—pink. Her husband was in high spirits

too; and after dinner a little stranger was introduced—an infant daughter, little Geraldine Damerel—the picture of its young mother, as far as went the large laughing eyes—the pensive brilliant lips. It was six months old, and Isabel almost laughed to see for how short a time its fragile mother could hold the joyous, bouncing child.

- "I've seen many babies, but never one so lovely as that," said the General.
- "Ha!—is'nt it magnificent!" cried Geraldine; "did you ever see such lips!—such a colour!"
- "It will be another Geraldine!" smiled Isabel. A cloud crossed Damerel's brow-he rose and rang for candles.
- "I'm quite flattered," laughed the beauty;

 "and I'm glad you don't say it's like William
 this time."

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Isabel quite started at the apparent unfeelingness of this speech; and till she saw Geraldine's eyes fill, her heart completely recoiled from her. She then glanced at Damerel; his brow was bent in stern reproof on his thoughtless wife, and for a moment there was a pause.

- "But we forget to congratulate your Excellency!" said Geraldine.
- "Some of us think it is a subject for condolence," said the General.
- "Ah! that's Isabel! you dear devoted creature, Isa, how like you!—now I should be so proud of it. I often wish William had been in your place, my dear General."
- "How often have I wished it," thought poor Isabel.
- "I thank you, my love," said Damerel very quietly.
 - "But I would have gone, too, to make a

conquest of the Emperor, or some dear, savage old Russian."

"Then you must kill Damerel," said Lord Hopeville.

"Oh, yes! I'd easily do that—besides—oh! Isabel, I'd go, if I were you! I could'nt with this little incumbrance!" and she buried her face on her child's lace-clad face and neck.

Isabel writhed under every word, but there was no help for it. She replied not; yet she could not help feeling the sting of "this little incumbrance!" Isabel had none!

At last the evening came when Isabel was to part, for the first time, with her husband. The travelling carriage grated slowly up the gravel sweep.

"Don't leave us," whispered Lord Hopeville to his host and hostess, whilst Isabel, in a distant window, sobbed ready to break' her heart, "perhaps your presence may nerve her," and he crossed the long room, and stood by his wife.

Clasped to his heart, Isabel had no words to breathe "Farewell"—no voice to murmur forth one sound.

"God bless you, my best beloved!" muttered the General in a broken voice; "you had better let me leave you now."

Isabel answered not—her deep, quick sobs alone were heard. Once, only once more, Lord Hopeville pressed her to his aching heart, and then firmly, but tenderly, disengaging himself, he was gone. Isabel flung herself on the first sofa, in a paroxysm of grief, and closed her ears to the hollow sound of the swift-retiring wheels.

After a time, Lady Geraldine approached, and in her lowest, sweetest voice, ventured some, whispered words of comfort.

- "Oh no!" cried Isabel;—"you do not know what I feel, Geraldine! You cannot tell what a husband I lose!"
 - " But only for a time, dearest Isa!"
 - "The pang of parting is the same—and I feel this is worse than death. You will excuse me for the rest of the evening I know."

Isabel rose to leave the room, and Damerel instantly advanced, silently and respectfully, and offered her his arm. She waved her hand in negative, and with a low tremulous "Thank you," left the room.

There was a long pause between the husband and wife. Geraldine first broke silence, and throwing herself back in her chair, exclaimed:

"May I inquire, my dear sober 'sposo,' the subject of your musings?"

The light tone of the beauty seemed to profane the stillness succeeding Isabel's burst of anguish, and Damerel sighed profoundly.

- "Come, William, talk; what are you looking so grave about?"
- "How false," mused Damerel, "is the tongue of the world!—they call the Hopevilles an unhappy couple!"
- "I can't think why Isabel makes such a fuss about the General, though he is a dear old soul?" said Geraldine.
- "She seems most devotedly attached to him, however," said Damerel.
- "I dare say she is—I'm sure I can't say; but I know pretty well, and so do you, I suspect, that it was not a love-match!"

"That is hard to believe, my love," replied Damerel, colouring deeply; "particularly after the scene of this evening—'pon my honour, it cut even me to the heart!"

- "Stuff! she can't really be so sorry. She can't really love him; and if she does, she has learnt to do so."
 - " So much the better, perhaps," said Damerel.
- "No!" cried Geraldine. "I would not give one 'sous' for the man who did not love me from the very first. I mean from the altar."
 - " From which?" said Damerel, coolly.

Even Geraldine was staggered at this pointed repartee. Yet she spoke.

- "From the first altar, whether it be in the faith of husband or wife, Mr. Damerel!"
 - "I am sure, my dear, I meant nothing."
 - "Didn't you?-ah! You did not? Thèn

what did you say that for?" exclaimed Geraldine, proudly. "You meant nothing, then? No! you never do mean much, William, or I should mind your words a little more!"

"I meant to say, Geraldine, I said that quite accidentally. I did not intend to—to offend you."

"Offend me!" sneered Geraldine, with a curl of her beautiful lip; "as if I am to be easily offended! No! I am never offended—but I can get angry!"

"News!" said Damerel, with a smile.

"I won't quarrel with you," replied Geraldine, with ineffable scorn; "but I will say, I think General Hopeville and I would—I think he would have made me a much—better—husband than——"

Than me;" said Damerel carelessly. "Very

possibly, my love; but I never knew he was one of your loves."

"Since my marriage I have had no loves!" said her young ladyship, pointedly; "and before it I had none save those who chose to make me theirs. Can you say as much, William?"

Damerel rose, and lighting his candle, left the room.

Geraldine clasped her hands on her knees, and, looking after him, muttered between her teeth:—

"That came home with a vengeance!"
She mused for some minutes.

"I was not his first love.—No; she is in the house! but I am his last. He worships me now. If I thought he cared but one straw for her, whatever betide, I would poison Isabel!"

The beautiful lips quivered, and she gnashed

her teeth, and clenched the small fair hands still closer on her knees.

The next morning the baby, who was teething, had a convulsion fit, and Geraldine flew to her husband. He was looking at a pair of carriage horses from the window of his library.

- "William! William! what shall I do! Baby has had a fit!"
 - "A fit! Is it over?"
- "Yes; thank God: but suppose it should come again?"
- "Then send for the doctor, and don't trouble me, for I really don't understand your nursery concerns. You must manage your daughter your own way, Geraldine. How do you like those bays?"
- "But suppose my darling should go off in one, William?"

- "Go off!-in what? where?":
- "Die!" said Geraldine, whilst tears rushed to her eyes.
- "Pshaw!" said Damerel; "tell me, do you prefer those bays to our present pair?"
 - "I must go to the child."
 - "Decide on the horses first."
 - "No I will not; the baby wants me!"
- "That is the spirit of perversity, and not any real love for your child," said Damerel angrily; "therefore, as I have sent seven miles, at your own request, for these horses, I desire you to give an answer."
- "I shall go to the nursery!" said Geraldine, walking to the door in great state.
- "Pardon me there;" said the husband, quietly preceding ber, and taking the handle in his hand. "You will walk to the window, and

are areatty. I am m



per !" said his wife. " I horses, but I choose the be greys, and everything that the door, Damerel."

- " You may go," said Da
- "There was the window door," cried Geraldine, flyin
- " Perverse, provoking, beautiful creature!" mutter walked down stairs.

Damerel complained hat Isabel that evening of his with She does all in her possible to be a substituted by the substitute of the substitut

boy, the valued heir of this place—and when I think that but for her neglect, that darling might still be alive—oh, it is dreadful!—Yet I believe at the bottom of her heart, she loves her husband in reality."

Isabel thought "and Adolphe."

"It may be wrong," continued Damerel,

"but my love for Chester was idolatry, and he
was taken! Isabel, I cannot interest myself in
a girl, as I did in my son."

CHAPTER XXII.

- "What makes you look so happy, to-day said Damerel to Isabel, as he met her accide ally in the beautiful park avenue of his house
 - " Two letters-where is Geraldine?"
- "Walking yonder with an unexpected a very unwelcome visitor, Lord Cecil Verno whom she insisted on asking for a week."
- "How annoying," said Isabel, "but I am delighted, I can think of nothing disagreeable here is my husband's first letter, announcing larrival in Petersburg—and here is my dear

sister's own announcement of her new signature,

- ' Fanny Fanshaw.'"
 - "Fanny married? surely!"
 - " Did you not know of it, Mr. Damerel?"
- "No, indeed. I congratulate you—and how is Hopeville?"
- "Oh quite well," said Isabel, kissing the letter; "and such a dear, affectionate strain! it almost repays me for my desolation of heart in his absence; my dearest, honoured husband."

Damerel looked at her, as she walked joyously by his side.

- "You are very happy, Isabel?"
- "'Am I not happy? I am! I am!" quoted Lady Hopeville, laughing.
- "Were you never happier?" asked Damerel, after a long, scrutinizing glance, and pause.
- "Yes," said Lady Hopeville, with a sigh, and the bright gleam faded by.

"Ah!" said Damerel, earnestly, "that was before we were both married!"

For once Isabel's haughtiest spirit burst forth in the flash of her mild pure eyes, as she turned, and fixing them firmly on Damerel, said:

- "No; I have been far happier! One month ago, for instance, when my husband was with me."
 - " Forgive me," faltered Damerel.

Isabel bowed with the coldest stateliness, and instantly entered the Castle. In the hall she met Geraldine.

- "Well, Isa, dear, what's the matter?"
- " Matter, Geraldine!"
- "Yes? have you seen a ghost, or Lord Cecil?
 do you know he is come?"
 - " I knew-please let me pass?"
- "Are you ill, Isa? how white—no, now how red you look."

- "" I am not ill, "Geraldine, lonly I have had letters from Hugh, my husband."
- ***Oh liabel, was that subterfuge needed? **
- · " Good Heavens !
 - " Oh nothing I delightful letters; but---" .
- "You want to devour them alone; you pattern wife;" laughed Geraldine, "but where's William?"
 - " I don't know; 'I-following me, I think."

Geraldine moved on—she lost Isabel's quivering start, as these last words accidentally fell from her lips—she lost the indignant flush of cheek and flash of eye, which turned from the approaching step, but averted eye of Damerel. She went to her room.

She sat alone and mused.

"This is dreadful! and it is all my own blindness. Something in my conduct must have encouraged him to that speech; yet I always thought I behaved so sternly. I must go!"

Mr. and Mrs. Seyton had gone to Dover immediately on Fanny's marriage; and as they were now alone, it was thither Isabel determined on going. All favoured the scheme; and whilst her cousin was dressing for dinner, she went and named the subject firmly and kindly, for Geraldine instantly raised an army of objections.

"You shall not!—pardon me, dear Isa—but you must not go! And now, of all times, when Mr. and Lady Helen Vernon, and an host of people are coming, and Lord Cecil here! Oh, no, Isa—I must have you here—to help me."

"My dear Geraldine, I am sorry to appear anxious to leave you so suddenly; but a General's wife," smiled Isabel, "must be very decided in her movements."

- "Then your dear, tiresome, old hus—I mean Lord Hopeville—has ordered you, I suppose, to stay no longer here?"
- "No, you wrong him. I leave, entirely to join mamma, who is alone. Fanny is married."
- "Fanny?---what, already? I felt sure that match would be broken off---didn't you?"
 - " Not I, indeed!"
- "Goodness! Well, I thought she was such a regular old maid. But that is no excuse—can't you leave your poor, dear old papa and mamma to enjoy their domestic tête-à-têtes for once in their lives?"
- "Geraldine, there is the second dinner-bell.

 You will allow me to order my carriage at ten
 to-morrow?"
- "I'm sure it's just because Lord Cecil is here!" said Geraldine, poutingly.

- "No, my dear girl; why should I care for his presence? I have been very happy here, thank you, Geraldine; and I leave you quite happy with your darling baby, and in all your splendour; so now dress, and be ready for once, when the third bell rings."
- "I'll make you stay," cried Geraldine; and no sooner did Isabel leave the room, than the young wife flew as usual to her husband. Damerel stood before his long glass, brushing up his light curling hair with no small complacency.
 - " William!"
- "Now, good Heavens, Geraldine! here you are again not dressed! What in the world makes you fly about the house in this state?"
- "What do you think !—Isabel has got some whim in her head to go, and she's going to-morrow!"

- "Going?" said Damerel, dropping the brush, and then stooping to hunt for it; "what makes her go?"
- "I can't imagine! I've done all in my power to persuade her; but she is as firm as a rock. She has caught that from that tiresome old husband of hers! What shall I do, William?"
- "We must just let her go," said Damerel, with a very peculiar expression, as he kept looking about the table.
 - "What are you looking for, my dear?"
 - " My handkerchief."
- "Here it is. Now I wish, William, you would coax her to stay!"
 - 44 I ?**
 - "Yes, you. Why can't you?"
- " My dearest, you are a much better hand at coaxing than myself."

- "Not with Isabel! Now, William, do attend.
 What are you bunting for?"
 - " My-my-ring."
- "You are blind, 'mon ami.' But I was saying, I shouldn't mind her going, if I could know her reasons. I'm sure she didn't think of going this morning before we went out—did she?"
 - " I can't say, I'm sure, my love."
- Go Did she say anything to you about her letters. She was walking with you, was she not?
- "I believe so," said Damerel, turning away. Geraldine started. She caught the reflection of his whole figure in the long glass. Lip, cheek, brow, temples, and even hands, to the very tips of his fingers, were all deep, glowing, crimson—that kind of transparent crimson which

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belongs so peculiarly to the blush of a fair person. That moment changed Geraldine from the childish girl to the stately, indignant woman.

She gave him one long glance of contempt, and left the room.

"Now, Geraldine!" said she to herself,

"play your part well; for well shall that false
heart rue this day!"

Whilst Adèle plaited and smoothed the long bright hair of her mistress, the Lady Geraldine thought on the events of that day. She now plainly recalled Isabel's pale, offended air, as she met her in the hall in the morning. She could still hear Isabel's gentle, musical voice, say in agitation, when saked where Mr. Damerel was, "following me, I think." She could still see before her Damerel's averted eye and humi-

liated expression of countenance as he entered the house. She still saw his embarrassment when she sought him, to speak of Isabel.

- "False, weak, pitiful creature!" exclaimed the high-spirited Geraldine, dashing away from the timid hands of Adèle—forgetful that she spoke aloud.
 - "Grand Dieu, miladi!" faultered the 'fille.'
- "Ce n'est rien!" panted her young mistress, again seating herself, yet pressing her hands on her temples; "ce n'est rien."
- "Miladi is so pale," insinuated Adèle, "perhaps she would like un pen de-de rouge végétable!"
- "Rouge!" cried Geraldine, drawing up her exquisite figure, whilst her eyes flashed. "Never! I descend to use art whilst this remains!" and

the faultless beauty that had won her husband. Some inward thought arrested her eyes, and she faltered—tears slid down the long lashes. "Away!" she murmured, dashing them aside, "this is no time for woman's weakness; I will rise above it all—even unloved!"

Geraldine's boundless command of countenance sustained her through the dinner. She had hardly ever taken so much pains with her appearance before; she sat triumphant in the consciousness of her beauty—in all the youthful yet matronly dignity of her ruby-coloured velvet dress.

"Are you packing upstairs, there?" said she calmly to Isabel, as they stood by the window alone after dinner.

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THE LADY GERALDINE.

- "Yes, dear Geraldine; and you must not implore any more," smiled Isabel.
- "I implore no longer," said Geraldine, and a silent quiver past over her lip.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"EMPLOY yourself, Isabel, my love," said Mrs. Seyton, one day when her daughter sat listlessly looking on the sea, as she bent over the white cliffs of Dover; "if you would enter into the gaiety or take up some amusement here, your time would hang less heavily on your hands."

"I am so painfully anxious about Hugh," said Lady Hopeville; "this delay in writing alarms me beyond expression; God grant all is

right with him: it is now two months since I heard last!"

- "But he was then quite well, my love."
- "Oh yes, and such kind letters—I received them at Castle Damerel. That reminds me the Damerels are in town again, so Geraldine will be in her element this Christmas; she likes Christmas in town."
- "I should say," said Mrs. Seyton, "that Geraldine was always in her element when not in her home."
- "A sweeping sarcasm," smiled Isabel; "but look, my dear mother, do you see that gentleman landing from the steamer?"
 - "Yes, my dear; a foreigner."
- "Surely, surely, you have not forgotten him, mamma!" cried Isabel.
- "I never saw him before, my love; who is it?"

- "Dear me—yes—it is M. d'Avignon! the famous 'Adolphe' of Geraldine!"
- "M. d'Avignon instantly recognized Isabel. It was himself, but not the frivolous young officer now; he was attended by a suite; he was the bearer of dispatches to the court of England; Adolphe was entrusted with a mission, and the attaché was now high in diplomatic service.
- "Do you make a long stay in England?" said Isabel.
- "One month; I am limited in regard to time; I start for Windsor to-morrow morning."
- "And this evening I suppose you inhabit that most sombre hotel."
- " 'Faute de mieux,' " smiled Adolphe, with a national shrug.
- "But, my dear mother, do you not think M. d'Avignon would find something a little 'de mieux' with us?"

"Let us persuade you to try?" said Mrs. Seyton.

Adolphe pressed his hand on his heart, bowed to the ground, assured Madame Séton and Miladi Ho'ville that persuasion was unnecessary, and then made his adieux till the hour of dinner.

Isabel sat alone when he was announced, and instantly questioned him as to her husband.

- "Although his Lordship's letters may have been delayed, said d'Avignon, confidently, "I may say with safety that our last dispatches mentioned the Russian envoy in perfect health."
 - "I live again!" exclaimed Isabel.
- "And now suffer me to enquire after my friend, my early companion, Lady Geraldine Damerel?"
 - "They are in town," said Isabel. And Angeles

THE DADY GERALDINE.

- 14 And little Chester, that noble child?4
- " Alas, did you not know that they had lost
- A change passed over Adolphe's countenance
- "Of small-pox," added Isabel, decidedly; and the expression vanished directly.

Isabel saw in a moment that the Frenchman knew Geraldine's character well, and had inwardly imputed to her neglect the loss of her child. "But they have a little girl," she continued.

" 'Vraiment,' " said d'Avignon, quietly.

He evidently thought the subject was not one of congratulation.

It is strange what a complete ray or beam of life and joyousness tinges the circle of which a lively foreigner forms one. Adolphe d'Avignon

was perfectly accomplished in everything befitting his station. He was elegant, courteous, and lively in society; he was well-informed on any subject, however serious, political or light; he had manners for court, camp, or drawing-room; he had learned perfectly the modern languages, and never spoke his own to a foreigner, but invariably addressed them in their own. spoke French, of course, but when she addressed him in it, he replied "that English was his happiness, his delight! that the nation was one host of 'braves;' that the language was his passion; the ladies, his respectful admiration! that he had a boundless ambition to feel English; and that when speaking the delightful language, he was at the 'comble' of his 'bon-

This very strain of epithets he could indulge

in with equal grace and vows of truth, in English, Italian, Spanish, or German; yet this young man was so entirely unassuming, that his way was one wherever he appeared.

He left the Seytons all pleased, both with him and themselves. This talent is an uncommon one. Adolphe studied it as an art. His compliments all had an air of simple truth, too delicately turned to offend. D'Avignon was aged in three years, and a deep shade of care and melancholy tinted the beautiful features. Isabel was very angry with herself, when, on looking at him, her heart silently whispered, "the hand of Geraldine has been there."

Isabel laid her head on her pillow that night tranquillized and happy; but the morning's sun beamed on a bitter scene. When she came down to breakfast, a packet of letters was on her table. An exclamation of delight passed her lips as she tore the large black seal.

- "Is the court of Russia in mourning?" said Mr. Seyton, half fearfully.
- "Oh yes, papa, for—" Isabel stopped—the enclosed letter was bordered with the very deepest black; her hand trembled, and every shade of colour left her cheek, till a damp ghastly hue spread over her brow.
- "Give me the parcel," exclaimed her mother, hastily, "Isabel, my love."
- "It—it cannot be!" said her daughter, in a choked voice, "surely, nothing is wrong."

There was another letter inside, also bordered with black; an official document scaled with the royal arms, black still! Isabel-laid haide the letters, and opened the document; a smothered groan burst from her quivering lipse-ake

clasped her hands over her eyes. / Mrs: Seyton read the parchaent with trembling hastey it was as follows:

"We have to announce with much grief, the sudden demise of our lamented envoy, General Lord Hopeville, who expired at our court of Petersburg, on the 20th instant, in the forty-fifth year of his age."

Isabel rose, and left the room, without one word.

"This is very dreadful," said Mrst Seyton to her husband.

"Follow her, follow her?" said Mr. Seyton, pacing the room, "what will become of her, poor girld" and her daughter on her knees on the ground, with her shead in her hands, and her long dark shair sweeping the

floor, yet her eyes were tearless. The still misery, the silent attitude of despair, was heart-rending, the wide look of bewildered sorrow was piteous to observe.

Isabel pointed to an open letter, when her mother raised her, and clasped her arms round Mrs. Seyton with a low thrilling burst of anguish. The lines were traced in the General's well-known hand—

"Leaving this world, let my last actions, my last thoughts, be devoted to you, my best beloved wife—console yourself; for you have ever been to me the most tender, the most gentle, the most perfect of wives; and never did I feel more acutely than now, how impossible it is to thank you in words. May God bless my own, own Isabel!

"Your devoted husbandy . . !" "

"Hopeville."

At that moment, Mrs. Seyton would have given worlds to see her daughter weep, but the shock had quenched the fountain, and tears had retreated to swell the bursting breaking heart of her, whom Geraldine had often called the cold, the passionless Isabel.

Her mother saw she was stupified; she tried all remedies to wake her to more violent and perceptible, though perhaps less acute, feeling—she bathed the cold, damp hands and temples—she moistened the quivering lips—she kissed the pale, drawn brow; Isabel's breath came and went in short and rapid gasps, and her eyes were immoveably fixed in glassy abstraction on her husband's letter. Mrs. Seyton removed the letters and parcel—her child did not observe it, for her eyes remained in the same cold stare.

" My child! my Isabel!" said Mrs. Seyton,

in a tremulous, soothing voice, "it is indeed a heavy blow—but you must bear it!"

"Mother! mother! I am trying!" cried Isabel, and throwing herself on her mother's breast, with one hysteric sob she burst into a torrent of tears.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Mr. and Lady Geraldine sat, one on either side of the fire-place, "tête-à-tête." They had just heard of Isabel's arrival at her lonely, retired villa in the Regent's Park—one of the General's latest purchases for her comfort and health. It was nearly one month after his death, and she now formed the subject of conversation between the husband and wife.

"Poor Isabel!" said Geraldine with a heavy sigh. Damerel echoed it, but his was longer and deeper—there was a pause.

- "I wonder!" exclaimed Geraldine, as if some enlivening thought had struck her, "I do wonder how she will look in her weeds!"
- "Good heavens!" cried Damerel indignantly,
 "to think of such a thing at such a time as this!"
- "Goodness me, why should I not? I often think I never would wear widow's weeds—they would not become me; I am certain I should frighten the crows in them."
- "Spare your light remarks," said Damerel in a thick husky voice; "such frivolous, unfeeling thoughts are ill-timed, to say the least."
- "I don't see that at all—I've a very great mind to get a cap, and see how I should look—see if I looked well as a widow."
- "You've paid me many compliments, but that exceeds all," said Damerel, vexed and mortified.

- "Was it a compliment, samico mio'? I am sure I never intended it. Now, I advise you to go and call on Isabel, and tell me how sheer."
- "Geraldine, ailence!—forbear!" oried Damerel, colouring with anger; "do not profane her sacred sorrow with—but upon my soul I believe you would do anything!"
- "'Cela dépend'—I don't know in what way you mean, my dear, passionate husband; but just look here," said Geraldine, and throwing back her clustering ringlets, she twisted her pocket-handkerchief in a rope round her undeniably lovely face, "don't I look like a widow, William?—eh?"
- "Very like one, I must say," said the provoked husband, turning away; "but wait, Geraldine,—the judgment may come on you some day."

- "Now that I see myself in it, I would not wear the cap if you were to ask me on your knees!"
- "Don't be alarmed, my dear—my knees are grown too stiff now."
- "Not from use, I am sure, my good 'sposo;'
 for you have never been on your knees to me
 for the last four years!"
- "No, my dear," replied Damerel with cold, forced calmness; "I am one of those who think that bending the knee to the creature, is mockery to the Creator—I kneel to no mortal!"
- "False!" exclaimed Geraldine, colouring crimson, and rising indignantly from her seat—
 "those words are as false as yourself!"
- "The less we say about that the better," was Damerel's sarcastic reply.
 - " I will question Isabel as to the truth of

io l'' whispered Geraldine, with the Bright, searching glance of a flend.

- "I dare you to do it!" cried Damerel, roused beyond control."
 - "Dare!—dare me!—Geraldine!"
- "I tell you what," said Damerel, his voice choked and trembling with rage, "if this conduct continues, I tell you candidly, Lady Geraldine Damerel, I will not live with you!— one more such scene, and, by all you hold sacred, we part for ever!"

Geraldine clenched her hand on her breast, as Damerel struck the table with a violence that echoed through the room.

"Part!" she gasped,—"you part from me? you have not the courage!—weak, spiritless, contemptible Damerel. You dare not! coward as you are!"

- "Dare not?-dared by you!"
- "Yes! dared by a woman, but that woman is your master spirit!" cried Geraldine, and, with a firm step, and erect head, she passed on to her own room.

Locking the door, she flung herself before the glass, and gazed on her beautiful features they were animated, but not distorted.

"Thank God!" burst from her lips; "he lost his temper, and I—I kept mine!"

Geraldine was triumphant. On her toilet lay a small pink note. Trembling, still trembling, like an aspen leaf, she tore it open.

"To-morrow morning, 'ma douce amie,' I leave town for Paris; can I carry any commands for Lord and Lady Chester?

" 'Toute à vous,'

"ADOLPHE D'AVIGNON."

"Star of my destiny!" murmured Geraldine, sinking her head upon the table; "it is in vain I would resist!"

With a storm of wounded passions raging in her torn breast—with her young heart, that heart once so fondly nurtured, so gently cherished, crushed by her husband's chilling scorn, Geraldine clung to that note with childish reliance. Her mind wandered back to Paris—to her happy home—to Adolphe's home, which would have once been her's. She looked in upon the tumult of her own—on Damerel's cutting anger.

It was night, and Geraldine—enveloped in a large cloak, disguised in a dark drooping hat—knelt by the cradle of her only child. Her eyes were fixed on its sleeping countenance—her lip pressed to its little hand. No tears moistened her eyes—her cheeks and brow burned, and the

full white eyelid fell, weighty with an inward sense of the resolution she was about to fulfil. Yet the roused spirit faltered not from its purpose. Slowly and tremblingly she murmured forth these words:—

"My child!—mine, though henceforth lost to me for ever. My only child—farewell!"

She hid her face, choked with contending passions. Remorse she stifled—yet still she felt its sharp keen edge.

"One kiss, my innocent! Ere long there will be many a blush upon that brow for me! my child—my hapless child!"

She rose from her knees, and passed on to Damerel's dressing-room. He had not yet come up. She seized a pen, and wrote:—

"The enclosed note will explain all. Fare-

THE LADY GREALDING.

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well; we part for ever now, but the deed is nime—you have gooded me to it.

" GERALDINE!"

The enclosed note was Adolphe's. She could not sign her name. "Damerel" was her's no longer: She dared not call it so!

"Now God forgive the rest," she exclaimed, and Geraldine left her home.

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CHAPTER XXV.

A BRIGHT cheerful fire was burning in one of the pretty rooms of a small house in Regent's Park; and at a table covered with papers, busily engaged in writing and reflecting, sat Monsieur le Comte d'Avignon, when a servant in the costume of a page entered, and said "a person" desired to speak with him.

"'Une personne!" said D'Avignon, passing his hand through the clustering curls of his perfumed hair; "is it any one I know?"

"I think not, Monsieur."

"At all events ask her to enter. How strange! Some adventure, no doubt!"

The page introduced a figure, veiled and muffled, and then retired.

D'Avignon, with his natural 'politesse,' rose and motioned her to a chair.

The figure shook its head—threw off the bonnet—flung the cloak aside—and sinking at his feet in all her wild frantic grief and anguish, yet still lovely, Geraldine knelt before Adolphe d'Avignon!

There was no acting in the genuine start of dismay with which Adolphe exclaimed:—

" Geraldine !"

"It is I!" cried Geraldine, wringing her hands; "be kind to me, in mercy, for I have no friend, Adolphe!"

"Dear Geraldine, in what can I assist you?"

said D'Avignon, gently raising her; "why have you sought me?—and at such an hour?"

"I have sought you," continued Geraldine, almost inaudible from agitation, "to throw myself at your feet—to cast myself on your protection!"

And in broken accents she stated all that had passed between herself and her husband.

The countenance of D'Avignon during the recital was well worthy of a painter's study;—the tenderness with which he had raised her from the ground had first given place to horror, and then mingled anguish and scorn. Now a stern contempt was on his brow, and turning to the mantel-piece, he buried his face in his hands.

"Is it to this, Geraldine, that your blind temper and passion have led you!"

"Yet hear me!" gasped Geraldine. "I will

THE LADY GERALDINE.

never—I cannot—return to that man! Desert me not, Adolphe!"

"What, in the name of the saints, can I do?" murmured D'Avignon.

"Take me to Paris!—take me away—I care not where. Adolphe, have pity on me!—take me to my father!"

And her fearful shriek pierced through his heart. He sat down by her; he lowered his voice to a whisper. "Calme-toi!" said he, and the scornful lip softened again. Geraldine's head dropped on her knees, and her long, bright, sunny hair fell over her like a veil, whilst bursting sobs escaped her. There was a long, a dreadful pause,—broken by Adolphe, who started to his feet suddenly.

"Geraldine, remain here till I return—a thought has struck me

- "Where, for mercy's sake, are you going?—you will not leave me, Adolphe?" cried Geraldine, flying towards him.
- "I am going to provide a suitable reception for you, where I think even you will not be refused," said he, in a tone of haughty contempt.
 - "Oh, Heaven, despise me not!"
- "You must be aware that this house is no place for you, Lady Geraldine, and worlds shall not tempt me to retain you here."
- "Where would you take me?" cried Geraldine, wildly; "not home?"
- "You have no home!" said D'Avignon, bitterly.
- "Too true!" sobbed the wretched wife; and in the paroxysm succeeding this speech, D'Avignon left the house, and rapidly directed his teps to Isabel!—to the lonely home of the widow.

She had not yet left her drawing-rooms, and though transfixed with grief and astonishment, she instantly acceded to D'Avignon's energetic entreaty that she would receive the unfortunate Geraldine."

- "Let her come," said she, in a trembling voice, "for she is now an outcast!"
- "My interview with her has been, to one who worshipped her once so deeply as I did, most distressing; yet I have been firm, almost to cruelty."
- "If my approbation can encourage you to continue that firmness, you have it; bring her here, and then—"
- "Then I propose going to her—her—to Mr. Damerel."
- "Bring her quickly," was all Isabel could say; and D'Avignon was gone.

When he re-entered his rooms, he was struck with the change in Geraldine's countenance. Her lips were firmly closed; she shrank from his eyes; yet her calm, fixed, and ghastly expression, startled him.

It was a difficult task for the warm-hearted D'Avignon to regulate his conduct by his sense of right, when the deep tide of adoration was pleading hard for one kind look to the crushed flower before him; yet he conquered, and hid every trace of wakened feeling; he told her firmly the course he had pursued, she bowed her head; he told her the course he should pursue, she shuddered, but replied—

"Do it; it matters little now: ere another day I shall be free."

As she said this, she passed her handkerchief across her lips.

Adolphe recoiled; it left them stained with blood!

- "Geraldine! what have you done?"
- "Nothing," replied Geraldine, with a quivering smile; "but—but—I have done with fear
 now—I know what is approaching—take me
 anywhere—it will soon be over!"
- "Geraldine," cried Adolphe, forgetting his assumed character, and throwing himself beside ber, "it cannot be, my own—my—"
- "Silence! you spurned me—you trod upon the broken flower—agitate me not, or I may die in your house—now let us go—to Isabel!"

The cousins met in tilence. Geraldine was carried to a bed—Isabel stood beside her—Adolphe was gone.

"Isabel," said Lady Geraldine, in a low whisper, "send for advice; "I feel—I know—"

some vessel has burst with this fearful scene—
I feel it rising—I shall be suffocated!"

Isabel flew in alarm to the bell; when she returned to the bedside, the snowy drapery was all soaked and saturated in that short time with the crimson tide still gushing from the parted lips of her unhappy cousin!

A physician came. He instantly, and without hesitation, confirmed the sufferer's own opinion; a large vessel on the heart had burst. The Lady Geraldine Damerel was dying!

When D'Avignon reached Carlton Gardens, William Damerel was in a state of frenzy.

Adolphe forced an entrance to his presence.

Damerel stood like a statue for a second, and then, with a gasp of fury, exclaimed—

"Stand off, villain! coward! to enter the house you have disgraced! Stand off—leave—or by Heaven—"

- "Mr. Damerel," said D'Avignon, "I will bear this, because I feel myself innocent."
- "Innocent? base villain!" cried Damerel, gnashing his teeth; "leave my sight,—but I will be revenged yet."
- "Whenever you please," said D'Avignon, calmly; "but hear me—your wife—"
 - " Wife?-I cast her off!"
 - " Is with Lady Hopeville."

Damerel turned livid; he shook from head to foot; yet he listened to D'Avignon's carnest appeal.

The epithets with which he loaded his erring wife were dreadful, but he listened. Hours passed, and still he vehemently exclaimed "Let her die! better die than live the creature she has made herself. Let her die—we meet no more on earth!"

But D'Avignon was not to be deterred from his end. He left the house at daybreak, but the husband was with him. He led him to the house where lay his dying wife; he led him to the very threshold of the chamber, but there the wretched man staggered.

"God forgive me if I curse her!"

"Not when you see her!" whispered the gentle voice of Isabel. She drew him to the bedside—she pointed to the bed. His wife was not sensible of his presence. He looked. It was a sickening sight—the pale, death-like, lovely face—the stained drapery! Damerel fainted.

CHAPTER XXVI:

Towards morning Geraldine roused from the stupor of exhaustion: Isabel was leaning over her, in tears.

"For whom the you weeping?" asked the low weak voice; "not for me, Isabel!—it is impossible! Isabel, I am going!—tell me, before I die, if you can ever forgive all that I have done to you in life?"

"I have nothing—little to forgive!" said Lady Hopeville.

"Nothing! little!" cried Geraldine vehe-

mently; "when I have embittered your whole life! Oh, if you knew the agony I feel to look back! What! nothing to forgive, when I wiled away William Damerel from you!—little to forgive, when I married a man I despised for his weakness, to triumph over your defeat? He was made for you—he would not have been weak with you!"

"I forgive all this, freely!" whispered the widow.

"And can you forgive my efforts to separate you in heart from your upright and noble husband, who saw through my vain attempt? Can you forgive my telling the prime-minister that to make him envoy to Russia was a personal favour to me? Oh God! it severed you for ever! Oh death, remorse is thy sting! Isabel, in mercy say you forgive this!"

"Geraldine!" said Lady Hopeville, earnestly;
"there is another's forgiveness to crave; there
is one peace on earth unmade!"

"Hush! your's is all I ask on earth. I know not how to ask! purdon from heaven—there is none for me!"

Again, the once bright lips were tinged with the lifeblood of that high young heart, and Geraldine sank back. Lady Hopeville went to the room where she had left Damerel. He was seated in a low chair, rocking himself backwards and forwards, as if in pain.

"Mr. Damerel," said Isabel, gently, "our poor sufferer must soon be released, should we not endeavour to tranquillize her last moments?"

" "God forgive her !" muttered Damerel, "but she can expect no forgiveness from me."

" She is leaving os," said Isabel.

- "She left me!" cried Damerel, clenching his teeth; "let her bear the punishment; as for consolation, send for a clergyman if you will."
 - " See her once more, Mr. Damerel."
 - "Never, by Heaven! unless-"
 - "Unless she asks for you?"
- "Lady Hopeville, in one moment I shall denounce heaven's vengeance on her !—No!— if she asks for any one, it will be for him"—and Damerel indignantly pointed to D'Avignon, who paced the room with folded arms.
- "Mr. Damerel," said Adolphe sternly, "when Geraldine sought my house, it was solely to entreat my protection to her father's home. You have not understood—"
- "Silence, Sir!" cried the husband. "That hapless creature had no domestic affections!—
 She cared not for husband, child, or home!—

the little love that selfish heart could spare, was another's—not mine: deny it if you can! For such a character, there is no pardon—no pity!"

Adolphe turned silently, and left the room.

Isabel followed him.

- "I have just seen her," said D'Avignon, his voice choked with emotion; "and she consents to receive the—the last sacraments!"
- "I will instantly send for Dr. ——," said Isabel eagerly; "although at such an hour, he will excuse it, since the case is so urgent."
- "Geraldine could not see Dr. —," said D'Avignon, colouring; "for surely you are aware her religion differs from yours!"
 - "How!" exclaimed Lady Hopeville.
 - "She is a Roman Catholic!"

Isabel commanded herself, so as nearly to

disguise her shocked and startled feelings. Silently she placed pen and paper before D'Avignon, and then again gained the bedside of her cousin.

D'Avignon's travelling carriage had been ordered at six in the morning. It was now postponed—he could not tear himself away. The physician felt the fluttering pulse of his patient—

"In two hours it will be over!"

"Geraldine! Geraldine!" burst from D'Avignon; and throwing himself on his knees, he clasped to his lips the pale and powerless hand.

"Is it you, William?" she whispered. "If it is—thank you!"

Adolphe could not undeceive her; and at the moment, the priests were announced.

"Let her husband be called," cried Adolphe

eagerly. "Implore him to take leave of her!—
after extreme unction he must not. Call him!"

Damerel consented, when told his wife had named him, to enter the room alone. D'Avignon did not allow himself to be seen—he retired to a distant room.

Damerel stood, proud and erect, beside the bed of his dying wife.

"I am here, Ge-" the name refused to rise.

The sufferer turned her large, wild eyes slowly on him.

- "I cannot see you clearly," she murmured; tell me who—who—is by me?"
 - "Your husband," said Damerel.

 Geraldine groaned feebly.

"My husband!—ah!—I have not deserved this kindness. I should like once—before I die—to feel your—your hand, William! I

have no strength to move my own, yet let me just press yours!"

Damerel bit his quivering lip, and placed his burning hand within the cold, damp palm of the expiring Geraldine. A convulsive sob heaved his breast—he turned his eyes away; and with a powerful effort she raised that trembling hand, and gently touched it with her lips. Gentle as was that timid kiss, it sent the agitated blood back to his heart; and when her faint low voice just murmured forth—

"Thank you!—forgive me!" the whole sternness of his nature melted away; and throwing himself on the bed, he clasped the dying form in one long, last embrace—and left the room.

- . "Daughter," said the priest, "in what faith do you die?"
- "Father, in none!" said the almost inaudible voice of Geraldine; "for I have lived in none!"
- "Did you say in the holy faith of the Church of Rome?" said the priest, bending still closer. Geraldine answered not—a shade was round those chiselled lips—a cloud upon those heavenly eyes—the damp of death upon the pure round cheek—the power of speech had fled, ere the spirit had passed.
- "Daughter," repeated the priest, "I exhort you, in the name of the Holy Virgin, Mother of us all—sign your faith—one word—one look—one sign."

But no-Geraldine moved not.

"Is there no power to rouse her?" said the priest, turning round. "Must her soul pass uncleansed into purgatory?"

Adolphe started forward, and placed his lips close to the ear of the dying girl—her last look was on him.

"Geraldine!—sign your faith, my own loved Geraldine!"

Those tones—that epithet of other days—stayed the winged spirit; and slowly but steadily she raised her thin, transparent hand, and made upon her breast the sign of the cross!

It was the last effort—a whistling sigh moved the bloodless lips—a short quick start succeeded. * * *

The Lady Geraldine was dead!

THE END.

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